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# Grow as You Pray— Pray as You Grow

A Special Issue

INTERNATIONAL  
*Journal*  
OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

FEBRUARY, 1956





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# INTRODUCTION

Virgil E. Foster

## Grow As You Pray, Pray As You Grow

EVERYONE prays. Everyone enters into some kind of conversation with the universe as he understands it. He can carry into that conversation such immaturity of spirit, such confusion, misunderstanding, tension, even bitterness, that the experience contributes nothing to growth of mind or spirit. He can, on the other hand, approach this conversation with such a sincere desire for enlightenment and guidance that prayer gives direction, quality, and joy to the whole of life.

God takes the initiative in the conversation, inviting it, speaking the first word in it. A fitting prayer is one in which a person responds to God's initiative by paying attention to his word, his revelation of himself, and in turn bares his true self to God.

Everyone is born with a basic tendency toward this kind of conversation with the Infinite, but the tendency comes to maturity only with nurture and training. Prayer is at the center of life, whether one develops it or neglects it. If conversation with the Infinite is neglected, the heart of life is neglected. If that conversation is cherished and developed, life in all its glorious possibilities is given a chance within the individual. Helping persons to learn how to pray and to grow in prayer throughout life is, therefore, one of the most important responsibilities of church and home.

"GROW AS YOU PRAY, PRAY AS YOU GROW" has been prepared with parents as well as teachers in mind. The best way to use it is to provide each family and each teacher and officer of the church school with a copy, then hold a series of parent-teacher meetings for the discussion of the whole problem and for sharing of insights.

It is especially important for each person to read all the articles. Parents and teachers of children may be tempted to read only the articles by Mrs. Edwards and Mrs. Young. But they cannot make full use of the suggestions of these two writers unless they read the two basic articles by Dr. Ferre' and Dr. Hazelton, then read

The writers of this special issue and the editors make no claim that they have answered all the questions about prayer. They simply want to help focus attention upon the need for more effort in helping persons to grow in prayer, and provide some useful suggestions as to how to give that help.

The problem is one with many aspects. It is apparent that many persons, even those faithful in the church, either did not get started right in their prayer life or let it become arrested on an immature level. These persons need help in renewing their interest in prayer and in re-educating themselves in it. Many young people got started right but are now in danger of losing interest. They need help as they face the new dimensions of life in youth and early adulthood. Then there are children being misled in their first experience of prayer who need understanding guidance lest they be turned away forever from this central experience of life.

It is hoped that this special issue will stimulate parents and teachers to put their own ideas along side those suggested and sincerely try to develop experience better than any reported in these articles. There is need for new insights. Perhaps some of these can be shared in a still more comprehensive and helpful special issue four or five years hence.

## How To Use This Special Issue

the articles on youth and adults to gain an understanding of how they themselves can grow in prayer. Parents and teachers of youth cannot fully understand their responsibilities without reading the articles about children.

Of all the issues of the Journal published in recent years, this one is the best to use as a gift. Churches will want a supply in order to give a copy to each young couple married in the church, to the parents of each new baby, to new members, to men and women in military service, and to families who come for counseling. Individuals will find it a gift much appreciated by many of their friends, including young people, students and others away from home, and adults of all ages.

## Appreciation

had to be left out, much to the regret of the editors who are aware of the need of every available insight.

It is hoped that the readers will match the devotion of the writers by helping to secure maximum use of this material and by reporting to the editors their own experience in helping persons grow in their prayer life.

THE EDITORS wish to thank the members of the editorial board for their counsel in the planning of this special issue and the writers for their devotion in undertaking their assignments in the midst of other pressing responsibilities. The writers were severely limited by the space available and some of their excellent material



**H**OW WE PRAY depends on what we believe about God. Recently a friend confided to me that her early attempts at prayer had failed because she did not believe prayer was honest. She believed that God was the great Creator and Maintainer of the universe but could not imagine him to be concerned about the daily affairs of countless little creatures. She has now learned, through years of experience in prayer, that God does answer prayers and that the greatness of God is precisely the greatness of his love whereby he takes personal interest in his every child.

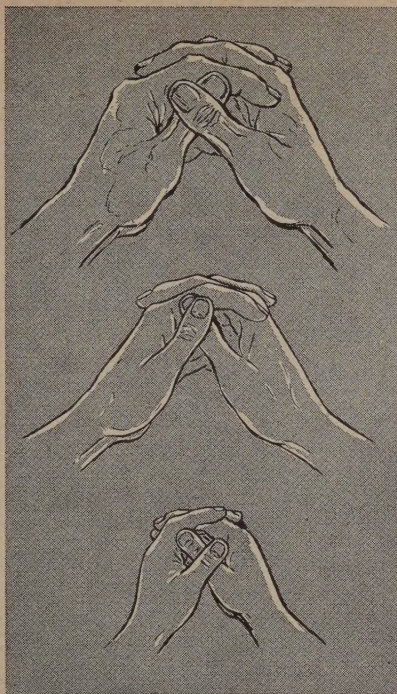
One of our American theologians likewise observed that Christianity's biggest offense to modern man, in his opinion, is simply prayer, Christian prayer, prayer where God does something that changes things. Yet the Christian faith is tested and expressed exactly by the way we pray. What, then, are some presuppositions for Christian prayer?

I

The first and basic presupposition is faith in a personal God. By a personal God I mean one who knows and cares. Alfred North Whitehead insisted, in personal conversations, that he believed in a personal God: a self-conscious God, a choosing God, a creative God, but above all the Friend and Father of our lives, the Companion who understands. God, for him, was the fellow-sufferer who enters into our pain and troubles with a tenderness and understanding beyond that of all human beings. Life at its center needs prayer. Moody said that the educated man was the one who knew how to pray and how to love, for in learning to pray we learn how to have right relations with God and in learning to love we learn how to have right relations with men.

Unless we really believe that prayer is a person-to-person call, we are not long going to cultivate the art of divine conversation. If we find no one at the other end of the line there is going to be an empty silence in our lives. Embarrassed, disappointed, but honest with our experience, we hang up the receiver.

The reason, among others, that we find no answer is that we think of prayer as our own doing. It is rather God's invitation and possible only as



## What Is Prayer?

by Nels F. S. Ferre'

we pray in his way. God is Spirit, and only as in complete passivity we accept our being lifted up in the Spirit can we ever pray and find God real.

II

Christian prayer also presupposes faith in providence. It accepts the fact that God acts in history and matters *in fact* to our lives. Providence is God's reign in righteous love over the starry planets and over all human planning. It is no interference

Dr. Ferre, an eminent theologian, is Professor of Philosophical Theology, Vanderbilt University School of Religion, Nashville, Tennessee.

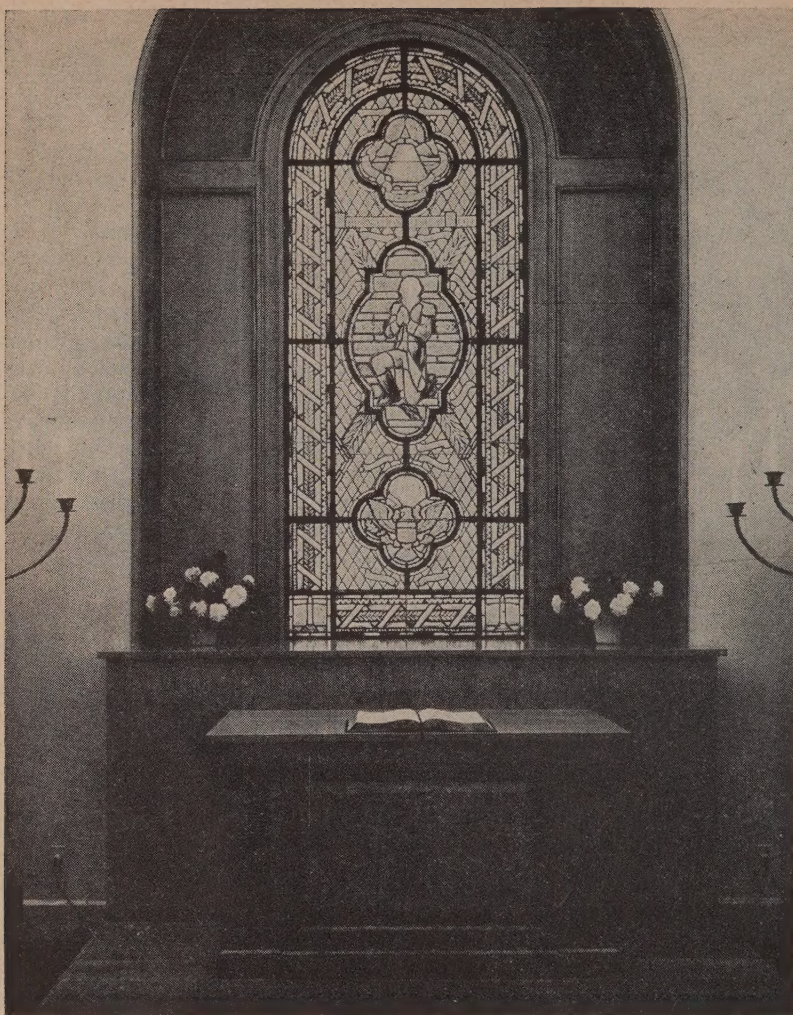
with his universe. It is rather the expression of the openness of the universe to his rule. If a human being prevents an accident by doing something in actual fact about a situation, such prevention is not interference with nature but only the manipulation of nature by purpose in line with what is natural. If human thought thus affects material forces, redirecting them, how much more is nature open to its Maker and Controller? It is most natural that God should act out his righteous love in nature. Nature exhibits fixed rules which are signs of the faithfulness of God, but it also shows itself open to genuine creative and responsible freedom in a most important and often decisive measure.

Because there is such fixedness for our common good, we must often hear God's eloquent no. Jesus, when he was tempted to defy the law of gravitation to illustrate God's care, had to hear God's eloquent no. Paul, wanting to be rid of his thorn in the flesh, heard God's eloquent no. One Christmas morning I was awakened by parishioners with the news that they had lost their twelve-year-old, a boy who wanted just one slide on his new sled before going to bed Christmas Eve, and was run over by a car. That family heard God's eloquent no. Natural evil is part of God's disciplinary control of our large measure of freedom. No child has prayed a Christian prayer for long who has not come to hear God's eloquent no, for whom God loves he chastens.

The cross is the deepest experience of God's love but also the highest expression of it, for the cross tells us that God comes to us in order to live with us and to suffer for us even to death, but also that it is God who comes and suffers and therefore gives us power to become new creatures in Christ, new beings, the finders of life and life more abundantly. Jesus could not avoid the cross nor can we if Christ be truly in us. Therefore Christian prayer presupposes that the cup is not always taken from us.

Providence, however, is not mainly a matter of God's discipline. It is not primarily a hearing of God's eloquent no. It is rather mostly our hearing God's majestic yes. God is with and for all in all things; and for those who love him, he works for their good in all things. Christian





Glenn D. Everett

The Prayer Room in the United States Capitol was opened early in the summer of 1955. The colored glass window shows George Washington at prayer.

prayer is therefore always victorious prayer. It presupposes that every prayer is heard in God's way and, therefore, for our true good which is our common good. Even when the answer is the cross or the thorn in the flesh, the fuller answer is resurrection and the grace that is exhibited in weakness.

The Kingdom is a social reality and every Christian prayer hastens the coming of the Kingdom. Every truly Christian prayer is for the Kingdom and for the Holy Spirit, both of which are not only personal but social. Prayer is the losing of ourselves, and sometimes it involves God's eloquent no, but all the way through and beyond such a no is God's majestic yes, thundering and whispering his love for all men. Our purpose as Christians is to be recon-

cilers of God and men, and men and men. As we pray rightly our prayers are always heard.

### III

Christian prayer, however, presupposes not only God's personal presence and not only his personal providence, but it presupposes beyond these his purpose into which we can enter. Prayer is mostly a matter of what God himself does in opening us to the Spirit, in whom alone prayer is real and effective, and also in his answering in his infinite way our finite asking. But prayer is also, within God's presence and providence, our doing. However much our doing be all of grace, it is authentically and responsibly our doing. God's purpose includes our becoming real and mature and our helping others

become real and mature. To pray in a Christian way we must therefore enter into God's purpose both for our own lives and that of other lives.

For the first we have petition. God has made us in such a way that asking develops our recognition that we are creatures and our acceptance that we are children. Our chief sin is to become self-sufficient. God has made it necessary that before we ever become right with him and with ourselves we must learn humbly to ask for our daily bread. Such prayer is for our sake and God never becomes truly real nor does our heart fill with gratitude until we learn rightly to petition. Although we cannot expect to be answered except as God knows what is good for us, for failing to pray believingly is usually the biggest obstacle to God's being allowed to answer.

In the same way, Christian prayer presupposes faith in intercession. In prayer we enter into God's purpose for others and become co-workers with Christ. Intercession is our best chance to feel most fully the heartbeat of God against our own. Intercession is also our identifying ourselves with others in all their needs. They need us and what we can do. Only the prayer of a righteous man helps, or the prayer of one who lives his prayer before God and others. When we pray for others as Christians we are led, enabled and inspired to help God answer our prayers. Yet, far more important is God's answer that we have helped make possible.

God's answering our prayers for others is part and parcel of the fact that we are social in nature and help the community most when we are least concerned with ourselves as apart from that community. Such openness to the inclusive community is the very meaning of Christ and the indispensable prerequisite for Christian prayer. God awaits our acceptance of Christ and the open community in him, which is the Church, as the removing of the main obstacle to his showering blessings upon his people. Many now sing the song of telepathy and psychokinesis, but thought and action of the mind at a distance are no song in comparison to the song of triumph in prayer for those who have learned to know God's presence, providence and purpose.



# Why Pray?

by Roger Hazelton

**T**HE QUESTION, "why pray?" may be asked, of course, in many different ways. One may be an outsider wondering what makes prayer such a common requirement for those inside faith. Or one may be thoroughly habituated to the business of praying, but for some reason or another anxious to take a freshly critical view of the matter. When we ask this question, are we merely curious or are we seeking reassurance? Here, as always, a great deal in the answer depends clearly on the intent of the questioner.

I shall assume, however, that the reader of this article is prepared to go much further than a cataloguing of the needs of men and women, seemingly satisfied by prayer, will allow. What we bring into the prayer-experience by way of needs is certainly not unimportant; and yet the question, "Why pray?" is simply not identical with the other question, "What do you want to get from God?" At any rate we Christians believe that human urgency and insistence are not the sole, or even the primary, reason for our praying. On the contrary, we believe that prayer has its reality and takes its rise within the very character of God himself. When we ask, "Why pray?" we therefore ask what there is about God that encourages and enlists our prayers; we want to know how our seeking after God is stirred and structured by God's own search for us.

For prayer, more than any other Christian act, is something that stands or falls with the priority, that is, the initiative and prevenience, of God. Prayer is a living dialogue or it is nothing. It is even worse than nothing—an empty gesture, mocking and deriding those who use it. Prayer not only presupposes God; it has its whole source and sanction within the being and action of God. I do not mean, naturally, that the mere prevalence of prayer can be taken simply as a proof of God, but rather

Dr. Hazelton is Abbot Professor of Christian Theology, Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts.



*Aigner from Monkmeyer*

Children should have the privilege of being in the presence of their parents while the parents are at their best—in fellowship with God in church and home.

that according to our faith prayer represents a very real part of his purpose for us. Why pray? Because God intends it, occasions it, elicits it as his chosen way of having fellowship with us.

But this will have to be spelled out a bit, since it is not apparently the usual view which our prayer-habits and prayer-words reflect. All our clamoring for God's attention, all our bidding for his favor—what does this suggest we actually believe about him? What, indeed, if not that he exists at some great distance from ourselves and that it is up to us to disturb his rather touchy transcendence with claims entered on our own behalf. And yet in all candor the Christian faith gives quite a different picture of the relationship between God and our praying. Says Jesus: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek,

and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9). Here lies the answer to our question, but it must be Christianly understood.

Notice that Jesus does not say that God is bound to give you whatever you ask for, or that if you do your part he will certainly do his to keep you happy and contented and secure. Jesus is not here putting prayer on what can only be called a paying basis. "Everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." Taken together, these verses of Scripture comprise both a promise and a command. Yet it is actually the promise which precedes the command, since it anchors down and authorizes the command. The only reason I have, finally, for my asking is God's giving—that is, God's readiness to listen, his eagerness to bend into the orbit



of my life in order to control it for my good and for his glory. When all is said and done, I pray because God hears, indeed because he is more ready to hear than I am to pray.

All this is frankly biblical, but is it reasonable? In reply let us consider two of the examples Jesus used for making clear this promise of God in relation to the command to pray. "What father among you," he asks, "if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent?" (Luke 11:11) And God's fatherhood is infinitely more loving, loyal, and lasting than our own. Whatever else he may be, he is no practical joker. So, if we know how to give good gifts to those who ask, how much more does God!

There is also the amusing illustration of the householder who is awakened in the middle of the night, when all his children are soundly sleeping, by a neighbor wanting to borrow some food for company. The neighbor knocks and then begins to shout, and finally, in order to put an end to the noise but not out of love, the householder comes down and gives the neighbor what he wants. God is like that, says Jesus. He would rather you kept on praying, even impatiently and childishly, than to leave him quite alone. For God can do something for you only if you put yourself in his way, put yourself at his disposal, throw yourself on his mercy. The only hitch in this wily humorous illustration is that God, unlike a sleepy householder, already knows what is best for us and does not have to be reminded. He only wants to know that we know he is the Lord, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.

On the surface, Jesus's words about prayer certainly seem simple enough. Doesn't this same requirement-and-reward motif run all through the gospels? It would seem that a condition is laid down and when it has been fulfilled a satisfying consequence results. So these words would then mean something like this: if you ask then you will get, if you want to find you had better look, if you knock then it will be opened. That would put prayer on a sound, dependable footing, so that we might know just where we stand with God.

How does it happen, though, that this is not what Jesus himself says? His own words lack completely this

"iffy" character. He does not tell his hearers that whatever they ask for, God is sure to give them. After all, may not prayer bring about the correction as well as the fulfillment of one's dominant desire? Prayer is of course petition, asking something from God, but it is also the act of lifting up one's petition and leaving it with God. One may not always come away from prayer with the same need or wish that sent him into it. Having prayed it through, he may find that it has been changed, even that he himself has been changed, and that his values have been surprisingly revalued. In the long run it is prayer, and only prayer, that teaches us what we ought to pray for. Sooner or later we make this prayer of Charlotte Bronte our own: "Grant us, O Lord, so to pray as to deserve to be heard." And then, but only then, we learn that some prayers do not even deserve to be said.

This is why we cannot possibly

## Obedience

**Eternal God, who commitest to us the swift and solemn trust of life; since we know not what a day may bring forth, but only that the hour for serving thee is always present, may we wake to the instant claims of thy holy will; not waiting for tomorrow, but yielding today.**

**Lay to rest, by the persuasion of thy Spirit, the resistance of our passion, indolence, or fear. Consecrate with thy presence the way our feet may go; and the humblest work will shine, and the roughest places be made plain.**

**Lift us above unrighteous anger and mistrust into faith and hope and charity, by a simple and steadfast reliance on thy sure will; and so may we be modest in our time of prosperity, patient under disappointment, ready for danger, serene in death.**

**In all things, draw us to the mind of Christ, that thy lost image may be traced again, and that thou mayest own us at one with him and with thee. Amen.**

**J. Martineau**

take these cherished words of Jesus to mean anything consequential or conditional; they do not mean that praying is a sort of super-technique for getting whatever we wish or need from God, nor do they mean a sort of guarantee that God will assuredly respond in kind and on the level of our asking.

Yet these words do disclose, and most emphatically, a certain real equivalence between our asking and God's giving, which is in fact the true spring and spirit of Christian prayer. In them, however, the usual order of the *quid pro quo* is rather drastically reversed. Something far deeper is involved here—an elemental trust or credence, a living context in which every prayerful encounter is at the same time an encouragement from "the 'prayer-hearing God.'" Hence in praying we are not concerned with meeting requirements and earning rewards, like children in a memory-verse competition in the church school. We are being drawn into an orbit of elliptical responsiveness, reciprocity, and resource. It is in this vein that John Bunyan wrote, "Right prayer sees nothing substantial, and worth the looking after, but God."

Prayer is itself the outcome of God's wish to help, his bending low to hear. And this in no way lessens his own majesty and might, but indeed expresses them. His promise disarms all our pretentiousness, all our devices of attention-getting, just as his command forbids all chumminess or coyness in his presence. Although this heartening invitation may not provide us with an automatic arrangement whereby prayer becomes the human cause of a divine effect, it does assure us that we have free access to the God whose goodness faileth never and whose righteousness is like the great mountains. In this assurance, moreover, we can venture boldly and without fear to pray to God. A Christian poet of eighteenth-century England, Christopher Smart, in his "David," put the matter well:

Strong is the lion—like a coal  
His eye-ball—like a bastion's mole  
His chest against the foes . . .  
But stronger still, in earth and air,  
And in the sea, the man of pray'r;  
And far beneath the tide;  
And in the seat to faith assign'd,  
Where ask is have, where seek is find,  
Where knock is open wide.



**P**RAYER IS AT THE very heart of Christian worship. Prayer is so profound that even the most devout adult feels there is much he does not understand, much that he has not experienced. Yet prayer is such a simple, natural act of fellowship and communion with God that even a little child can find satisfaction and joy in it.

The little child's first experience of prayer should be in his home, in the intimate fellowship of the family. In a home where God's presence, help, and guidance are real, the little child seems to have no difficulty in accepting the idea that God, though unseen, is with him always and hears him when he prays. God's presence is sensed so often, as the child explores, wonders, and worships with his parents, that he comes to accept the idea of God's nearness as he does the air he breathes but cannot see or feel.

#### **The child's concept of God**

The child's interest in prayer and his growing experience of it depend to a great extent upon the ideas of God that he gets from his family. Parents must make sure that the child has ideas which can grow as he grows—right ideas, happy ideas, on which he can build.

A little child first becomes acquainted with God through learning what God does for him. He needs to know that God loves him, cares about him, and has made provision for his needs. He must be helped to have a feeling of security and trust in God's care at all times. Only then can he find satisfaction in the thought of talking with God in prayer.

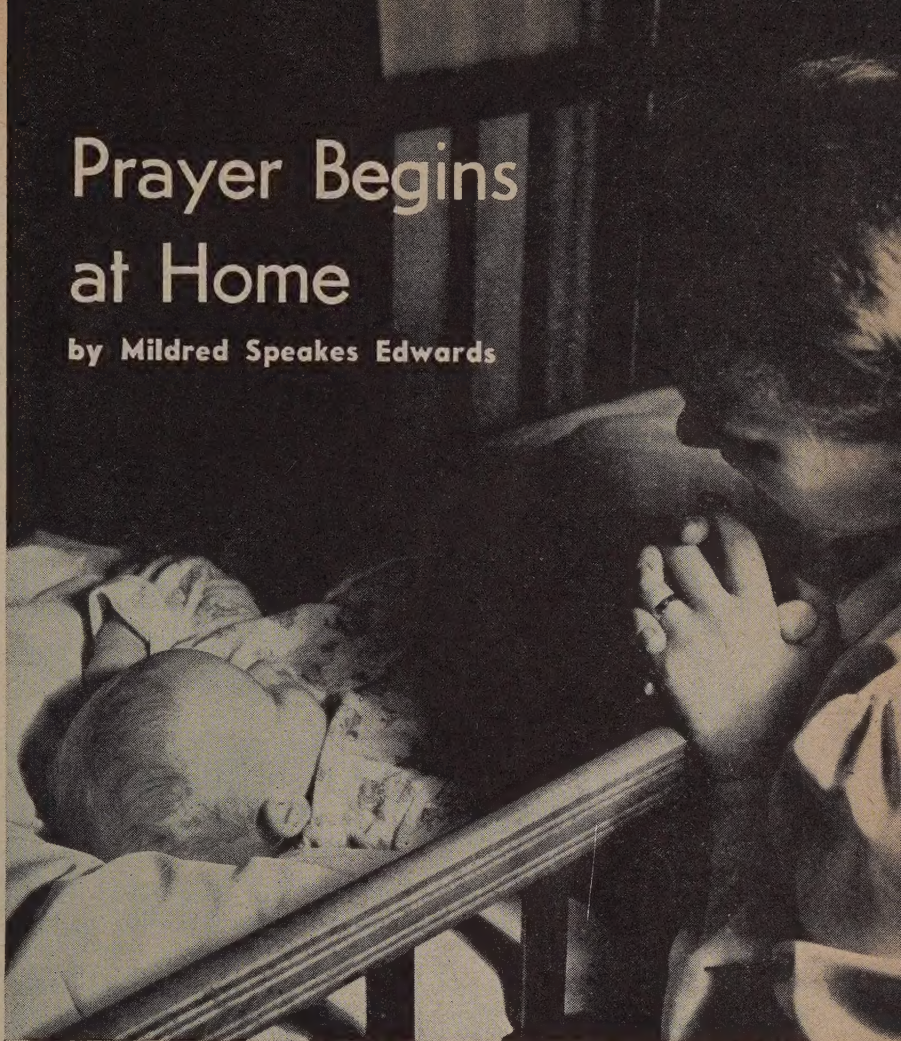
Parents need not be concerned if the little child's first ideas of God are of a physical being, perhaps a larger edition of his father whom he loves and trusts. This picture of God will change gradually as the child enjoys happy experiences of God's nearness and is led to see God at work in the world about him.

The sincerity and warmth of the parents' love as shown in their attitude toward the child, and their faithful care day by day have much to do with the child's understanding and response to God's love. The

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# Prayer Begins at Home

by Mildred Speakes Edwards



*Luoma Photos*

#### **PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY**

Almighty Father of all, who dost set the children of men in families, enable us, we pray thee, so to guide the children committed to our care that they

may love the ways of truth and of righteousness, of peace and of good will. Fulfill in them our divinest dreams, and through them carry forward the coming of thy kingdom upon earth. Amen.

child has no idea of the meaning of love except as he experiences love and care in his family and in his gradually widening circle of relationships.

The child's concept of God and of worship are vitally affected by the sincerity and warmth of his parents' own relationship with God. Only out of a living, growing, vital Christian experience can parents rightly interpret God to the child and guide him in a meaningful prayer experience.

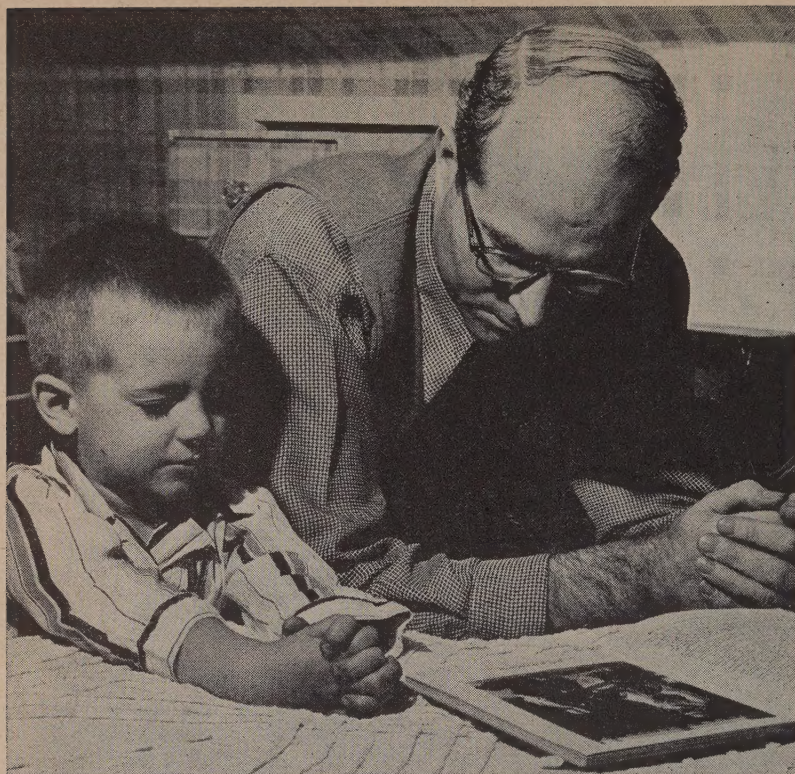
If the parents' faith and convictions are strong and sure, if they live these from day to day, this will be known to the child and will shine

through all they do and say as they try to guide him. A child who lives and grows in an atmosphere of love and of faith and trust in God has a framework within which he can build right and happy ideas of God.

#### **Bedtime prayer**

A young child's first experience of prayer may be to hear his mother or father pray aloud when he is put to bed at night. It is natural for a parent to feel a prayer in his heart when he puts a baby into his crib at bedtime. Expressing this prayer aloud includes the child in the act of worship. The prayer will be only a soothing sound to the child at first, something that makes bedtime hap-





Jim McNeely

Parents need not be concerned if the little child's first ideas of God are of a physical being, perhaps a larger edition of his father whom he loves and trusts.

pier and adds to his feeling of being loved and safe. Gradually the child will begin to expect the rite, and to be disappointed if it is omitted. Later he will try to take part by imitating the parent's posture and speech sounds.

As the child learns to communicate through speech the parents can begin to guide him in telling his thoughts to God as naturally as he talks with them: talking with God about happy things of the day, thanking him for good gifts, telling him about things he is sorry for, asking his help in remembering to be kind and helpful to others.

It is natural that much of the prayer guidance should come at bedtime, although parents should be alert for every opportunity for spontaneous worship. At bedtime there can come quiet, undisturbed moments when one parent or the other talks with the child in the privacy of his own room or corner. Happy events of the day are recalled, and become more sweet for this sharing. Perhaps the child also tells of some happening of the day for which he feels sad or sorry; or the parent, knowing of

a need, gently guides the child's thoughts in that direction.

It becomes natural after this intimate time of fellowship to suggest that "we tell God, too." Before the prayer is voiced parent and child talk over the things they want to say to God. Prayer thoughts are thus formed in the child's mind and the prayer becomes a true expression of his own ideas. At times poems, stories, and songs will be a part of the bedtime worship experience. As the child listens or takes part with the parent he thinks of things he would like to tell God, and prayer follows naturally.

The child or the parent may pray, or both may take part. The child has a definite part whether or not he actually voices the prayer himself, but he should be encouraged and helped to pray aloud. When he does pray he should pray in his own words, speaking his own thoughts in childlike words and ideas that have meaning for him. When the parent prays with the child he also should use childlike words and ideas. This does not mean that he will "talk down" to the child, but that he will

talk to God simply, as the child would.

Gradually the child acquires his own vocabulary for prayer and is able and glad to pray aloud. He can also be encouraged to have a brief silent time when he "thinks" his prayer rather than speaks it.

### Form prayers

Simple form prayers may be taught and used occasionally after the child has begun to pray freely in his own words. They are helpful in increasing his words and ideas in which to express his own prayer thoughts, but they should not be used too often, because form prayers can become a hindrance to worship. Sometimes they get to be merely a mumbled rite to be gotten through before tumbling into bed. When they are used they can be given meaning through conversation and the use of a picture, story, or song.

One of the most common form prayers in use is the familiar "Now I lay me." Someone has written a beautiful version of this that leaves out the thought of possible death during the night:

Now I lay me down to sleep;  
I pray thee, Lord, thy child to keep.  
Thy love go with me all the night,  
And wake me with the morning light.

With this prayer the parent may use a simple Bible verse poem: "I lie down and sleep; I wake again . . . I will give thanks to the Lord . . ." (Psalm 3:5; 9:1). If the child seems to have feelings of fear at bedtime there may be added these words: "the earth is full of the . . . love of the Lord" (Psalm 33:5).

### Any time and anywhere

As satisfying as bedtime prayer experiences are, parents must also be very careful that there are many other times and places when they pray with the little child. In the day-by-day family living there come many occasions when it can be the natural thing to voice spontaneous prayer thoughts. Such informal prayers help the child know that he may talk with God at any time, in any place, and God will hear. Such prayers, expressed at the moment of greatest interest, or joy, or need may mean much in fostering a growing, satisfying prayer experience for the child.

"Thank you, God, for the pretty flower" Linda prayed when her heart was full of wonder and delight at the



beautiful jonquil she had touched and smelled. "Thank you, God, for this happy time" may climax many family good times or may come when the child has had an especially good time with playmates. At other times no prayer may be said aloud, but in quietness and wonder—perhaps at the beauty of the stars in the night-time sky—the child will commune with the heavenly Father who "made the stars also."

### Content of prayers

In guiding the young child we usually place emphasis upon prayers of thanks and love to God. "Asking" prayers can prove a hindrance to the little child's faith; certainly they are not the highest kind of prayers for anyone to pray. The little child has yet to learn that God sometimes has to answer our prayers with "no." He has to learn that God cannot grant our prayers when they are not right for us or when they are selfish and might bring unhappiness to others. He has to learn, also, that God has given him abilities and powers to use for himself—it is his responsibility, for example, to keep himself out of the street and out of the way of cars.

He learns these things gradually as he learns more and more about the world in which he lives. Until he does learn them he should be guided mainly in prayers of joy, praise, and thanksgiving. Such prayers are always pleasing to God and wonderfully enriching to the individual, whether adult or child.

There is a place, however, in the prayers of a little child for requests for God's help in doing what is right, in living in a way that is pleasing to God. Such prayers need to be voiced in concrete terms, asking God for specific things: "God, please help me remember to be kind to Ronnie when we play." Guidance should be given to help him know what is his own part in answering such a prayer, what he must do about it himself.

### Thanks at mealtime

The little child must have not only his private prayer thoughts and his prayer times with one or the other

parent. As he grows older he needs the fellowship of group prayer in the family. Mealtime is an appropriate time for such worship experiences as soon as the child is old enough to eat with the family. At times he may be asked to voice the prayer himself, but not so frequently that giving thanks at table will seem to be only a child's role. When he does this he usually should pray in his own words. At times a form prayer, such as the following, may be used and the child taught to say it with the others:

We thank you, God, for all your care,  
For home and those who love us there;  
For work to do, for happy play,  
For food so good to eat today.<sup>1</sup>

At times the family may repeat Bible verses of thanks, and the little child may learn to say a simple one such as, "We give thanks to thee, O God" (Psalm 75:1).

Singing graces are used and enjoyed by some families, and the little child learns to join in as he hears the song over and over. Many families find a definite feeling of unity through clasping hands around the table as they sing or say the mealtime prayer. Even the little child in

<sup>1</sup>From "Opening Doors of Faith," by M.S.E. Beacon Hill Press. Used by permission.

his high chair senses the awe and wonder of this group worship, and responds to it.

### Family worship

There should be in the schedule of every Christian family a time, other than at mealtime, when the Bible is read and the entire family prays together. It is difficult in our modern pattern of living to arrange this, but this very difficulty points up the urgent need of finding a quiet time for "togetherness" in worship. As soon as the child is old enough he should become a part of this worship group. It will strengthen and broaden the base for his faith, and for his guidance in Christian living. As the child enters into the fellowship of prayer with the family his ideas of God are enlarged, he senses that life has meaning beyond the things he can see and grasp. God becomes very real to him, and a foundation is laid for abundant Christian living.

Among the books which will be helpful to parents in dealing with the religious development of their children are, *Guidposts to Creative Family Worship* by Anna Laura and Edward W. Gebhard, *Your Home Can Be Christian* by Donald M. Maynard, and *Our Children and God* by Mrs. Clarence H. Hamilton.



Dorothy L. Carl

In family living there come many occasions when it can be the natural thing to voice spontaneous prayer thoughts.



# When Children Pray

by Lois Horton Young

IT WAS TERRY'S bedtime. Clean and freshly clad in soft pajamas, he knelt beside his bed to "say his prayers," as his mother put it. "God," he prayed, "thank you for mother and daddy and baby Ann. Thank you for my house and my bed and for rain and electricity. But it's rained enough now. Please make it stop so I can play in the sun tomorrow. Or make it snow. Amen." Then Terry hopped into bed. Mother kissed him and turned out the light. Had she missed an opportunity to help him grow in his ideas of God and in prayer?

The warm and vibrant quality of the little child's prayer, the freshness and intimacy of his fellowship with God can grow with the years, or, if adults are indifferent to his prayer life, it can become a meaningless "saying of prayers." From there it is but a small step to complete severance of conversational relationship with God.

In scrutinizing our part in guiding the child's growth in prayer, we find no simple solution. There is no "typical" child; rates of growth vary; there is no set of rules to follow.

The prayer experience is so interwoven with other aspects of growing that it cannot be developed independently. Just as learning to read is a complex process related to many

skills and to emotional and physical factors, so is learning to pray.

## Steps in learning to pray

Children learn to pray first of all through being in the presence of others while they pray and through imitative experience. The attitude, posture, tone of voice, of people engaged in prayer provide an atmosphere to which children are sensitive very early.

Growth in prayer comes as children soon move beyond imitation into creative experience of their own. It springs from both thought and feeling. Prayer comes from an overflow of joy in adoration and thanksgiving, or from a consciousness of need. Like other forms of creative expression, prayer has its roots in the everyday things a child thinks and does, the things he sees and hears, touches and tastes, in experiences which stimulate creativity; it is active; it is self-giving.

## Parents and teachers can help

How can those who care about the child help him to discover how to pray and help him to grow in prayer? Parents and leader have these responsibilities:

1. To be aware of the individual

child's stage of development, and his current problems relating to everyday living as well as any problems specifically relating to prayer.

2. To watch for opportunities to help him develop his ideas of prayer and his ease in praying. These often come unexpectedly.

3. To enrich the child's experience with opportunities to observe, to hear, to do, which will develop his appreciation of the world around him and his reverence for life.

4. To provide opportunities for practicing prayer. These should include some planned periods of worship. Like other kinds of learning, prayer calls for actual *doing*.

5. To help the child discover new ways of praying, such as writing out a prayer, or discovering hymns that express his prayer thoughts.

6. To stimulate his thinking about prayer, perhaps by asking him questions. As he answers, he will not only reveal his thinking but also clarify it.

7. To establish home and church cooperation in understanding the prayer needs of individual children, and in giving them guidance in the growth of their prayer experience.

## NURSERY CHILDREN

What does prayer mean to a three-year-old boy or girl? For some children, of this age the experience of prayer may be little more than an awareness that there is someone called God with whom adults talk. However the comments, questions and prayers of other three-year-olds indicate that prayer may mean something like this to them: "God is a special person. I cannot see him, but I can talk to him and he will hear me. I can tell him the things I am glad for. I can tell him when I am sorry. He loves me so he likes for me to talk to him."

Though a child of this age may use the expression, "Thank you, God for—," this probably means "I am glad for" and does not carry the implications of thought and feeling of an older child's prayer of thanksgiving.

Adults create confusion for young children when they guide them to direct prayers to Jesus or to both God

and Jesus. Another source of difficulty for nursery-age children is the effort of adults to teach them form prayers which have blurred or even obscure meaning for them. Without the least intention of doing so, adults teach insincerity by offering a language of prayer without meaning, and convey the idea that there is some magic in words.

On the other hand, if the form prayer is simple it may help the child to discover a language of prayer. It may suggest new thoughts for prayer, and develop the child's ease in finding expression for his own ideas. This mealtime grace is such a prayer: "We're glad, dear God, for food to eat. For milk, and vegetables, and meat. Amen." This might be used as a unison grace before dinner, but like any other form-prayer, should not be used continuously, lest it become a worn-out ritual.

Experiences which arise at home or at church offer opportunity for

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prayer of a spontaneous nature. A group of nursery children watching a goldfish swimming might be ready to pray, "We are glad for a shining fish. We like his bright orange; we like his soft tail. You are wonderful to have thought how fishes could be, O God!" Again, Billy has enjoyed visiting his grandmother, and on the walk home mother suggests, "Didn't we have fun? Let's talk with God about it."

By using such moments for prayer, the parent or teacher helps the child to recognize them at other times. At first the adult will suggest prayer and provide simply the words which express the child's feelings and thoughts, but he will later offer the child an opportunity to voice his thoughts for himself. Then one day the three-year-old may express his readiness to talk with God, "I feel like talking with God about it."

The child's first steps in spontaneous prayer may come in response to such an adult suggestion as "You may tell God how you feel about the kitten," or "I think God would be glad to have you talk with him about our party;" but the child must never be put "on the spot" or forced.

In a church or home situation, worship moments which lead to prayer may come through a story, conversation, an activity, or a song. After a conversation at church about ways mothers help us, children might be led to pray, "God, we are glad for mothers. They get our lunches ready, and wash our clothes, and read us stories."

After a story about the church, the leader might sense the children's feeling of gladness for their church and might say, "We are glad for our church; let's talk with God about it," following this with a brief prayer.

After a walk in the autumn leaves children sit quietly under a tree listening to them swishing together in the wind. The leader or parent feels they are ready for a moment of talking to God, and speaks what he thinks might be their thoughts.

At the nursery level we hope the child may find a growing freedom in

speaking thoughts to God and in praying "I am glad for" prayers relating to his everyday experiences. The habits of grace before meals and of bedtime prayer should be established.

Some suggestions for establishing a pattern of home-church cooperation, which may carry on into later years are:

1. Parent-teacher conferences on prayer.
2. Distribution in homes of leaflets which relate to children's growth in prayer, and books and articles which will be helpful on this subject.
3. Letter to parents encouraging them to be aware of the child's need for help in learning to pray, and giving helpful suggestions.

## KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

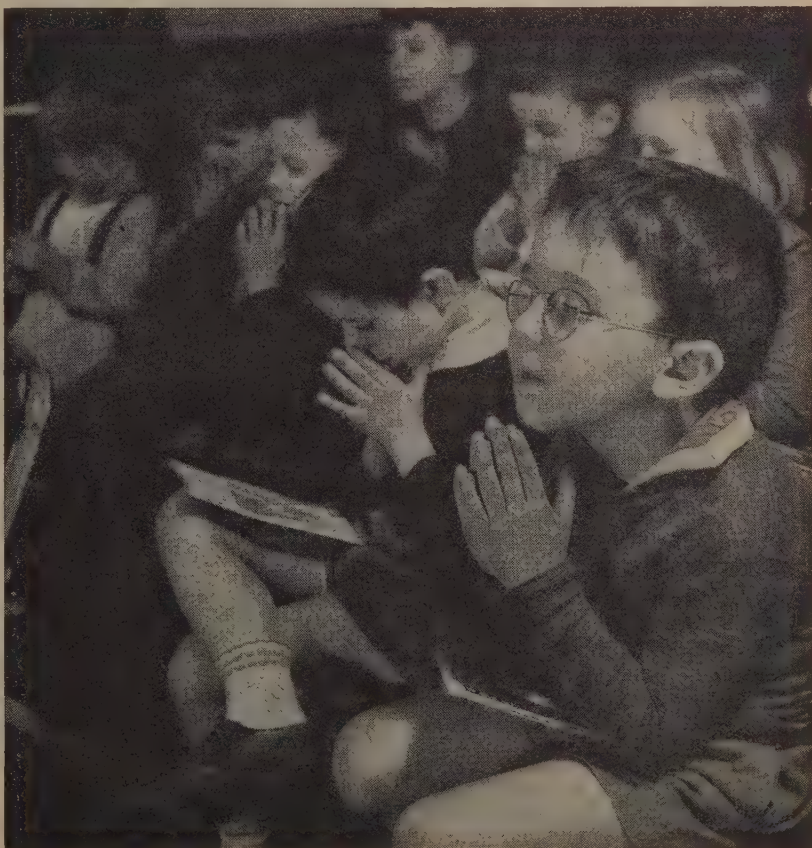
From early infancy the child develops love for the parent as he associates the comforts and security of life with mother or father. Gradually there dawns the realization that parents "do these things for us because they love us," and the bonds of affection between parent and child grow strong. His relationship with God grows in the same way.

In the kindergarten child's prayers gladness for things and people will be, as with the younger child, the most frequently recurring theme. However, in these years prayers of thanks may grow to include thanks for God's love which provides these

blessings, wonder at his wise planning for the world, appreciation for people who show friendliness and helpfulness, and gladness that we too can share and work. Giving thanks for Jesus, for favorite Bible stories and for our church will gain a larger place in the child's prayers.

At four or five the child may begin to ask God to help him in specific ways: to be friendly to playmates, to show kindness to visitors, to be helpful at home, at church, and at play.

He will have a tendency to ask God to give him material things, to provide good weather, to adjust the



*Aigner from Monkmeyer*

At four or five the child may begin to ask God to help him in specific ways: to be friendly, to be helpful.



circumstances of life to his own convenience. It will take a wise parent or teacher to guide him into discovering that prayer is more than a letter to Santa Claus, magically answered—that prayer is wanting to know God's way for us. The child's very credulity and complete faith at this age lay a heavy responsibility on parent and teacher, who must help the child develop his faith in God as one who is able, all-wise and powerful, but at the same time help him see that God cannot change his laws for our whims and fancies.

These thoughts about prayer must be shared in the child's own language and in relation to real experiences he is having.

Leaders should be aware of the tendency of children to regard God as "magic," "just like superman," one who "can do anything, like fairies," "God and Santa Claus can give you anything." (These quotations are from four- and five-year-olds.)

Another problem to be surmounted is the idea that God is far off somewhere among stars and airplanes. Children who bring this idea to church kindergarten usually have caught it from their parents. As Susan put it at Hallowe'en, "A witch could fly up to God," or as Byron put it, "Sometimes airplanes go right past God."

The kindergarten child reduces abstractions, generalities, and the symbolic to the specific and literal. Encouraging a child to ask God to help him "be good" or "be kind" will have far less value than guiding him to pray for specific four-and-five-year-old kinds of goodness or kindness, as "help me to want to let Teddy have a turn on my bike."

Our object is not to teach the child merely to "say prayers," which would not be difficult; we want him to learn to pray. We must be sure that any form prayers or pattern prayers are used only at times and in ways that are full of meaning, related to the child's immediate experience. Though at times he may need mother or daddy or teacher to express what he is thinking or feeling, the child should be encouraged more and more to give expression to his own ideas.

Even in a group, prayer may not be a whole-group experience. It may be an individual or small-group experience, as the leader sees an occasion when prayer may be meaning-

ful. Three children have finished making get-well cards for the minister to use in pastoral calling, and they pray, "Thank you, God, for our minister. We are glad we could cut and paste these cards for the sick people."

When groups have built ideas and experiences together through a unit, they may be ready to make up a prayer for the leader to record, with several children contributing, or to compose individual prayers. Sometimes these may be used on succeeding Sundays, and illustrated with paint, chalk or cut paper.

Creative singing has a place here, too, and children may find satisfaction in spontaneously singing their thoughts to God. Several children may have turns to sing their prayer-thoughts, or this may be an individ-

ual experience at church or at home.

Real prayer experiences during the kindergarten years can broaden a child's ideas of God, help him understand what to ask God for and how to ask it, increase his appreciation of God's love and the desire to thank him, and give him a beginning sense of God's presence in his quiet times.

- Resources for  
Nursery and Kindergarten Children**
- My Prayer Book*, Margaret Clemens  
*First Prayers for Little Children*, Mary Alice Jones  
*Prayers for Little Children*, Mary Alice Jones  
*A Little Book of Bedtime Songs*, Jeanette Perkins Brown  
*A Little Book of Singing Graces*, Jeanette Perkins Brown  
*A Child's Grace*, Constance Bannister  
*A Little Book of Prayers and Graces*, Marguerite de Angeli

## PRAYERS OF THREE-YEAR-OLDS

Dear God, thank you for our good food.



Dear God, thank you today  
For food and rest and play.



Clark and Clark

Surrounding should provide a setting in which prayer becomes meaningful, and there should be opportunity for listening as well as speaking to God.





## PRIMARY CHILDREN

The primary years bring a longer attention span, and the capacity to participate in a more sustained worship experience.

It continues to be the parent's or teacher's responsibility to take advantage of occasions when spontaneous prayer may be meaningful. Too often we tend to regard the carefully planned prayer experience of a worship "program" or "service" or "period" as the only prayer a church school session need include. Sometimes we add a prayer at the close of the class session.

It is important to guard against giving prayer only a planned place in the sequence of a day at home or a church school session. We must help the child to find God as near as his own need, as close as beauty, as ready to hear as our best friend. We must continue to help each boy and girl to pray when he feels the need or impulse, recognizing that these moments are frequently not planned or premeditated.

Besides putting this spontaneous experience to use in a church session and in the family circle, we need to encourage the child to pray when he is "on his own."

The program at church should be carefully planned so that surroundings provide a setting in which prayer becomes the natural and meaningful climax. Worship should now give a

larger place to *listening for* as well as speaking to God—times of silence, offering opportunity to think silently to God and to be ready for thoughts of him to fill our minds. These are necessarily brief; better too short than a moment too long and ending abruptly in a giggle or whisper which announces an exhausted attention span.

Prayers of thanksgiving should continue to mature as parents and leaders help children to find new reasons for giving thanks and praise to God. Primary children can begin to be thankful for something another group or person is enjoying and prayers should grow less self-centered than those of the younger child. Prayers of petition will begin to include, "Help me to do right," "Help me to do hard things," "Forgive me, and help me to do better," and give a larger place to the needs of others.

The primary child will find many Bible verses and passages which express his own needs and feelings. These may be used as prayers re-

We must help each child to find God as near as his own need, as close as beauty, as ready to hear as a friend.

*Clark and Clark*

peatedly until they become a permanent part of his thinking.

Developing concepts of God are necessary at this age level for a growing prayer life. "Is God cruel and resentful?" "Does he cease to love us when we do wrong?" "What standards must we meet to please him?" "Is there a relation between pleasing him and having our prayers answered?" The child has many questions relating to God. The encouragement we offer him to express these, and our careful answers will have a bearing on the growth of his prayer life.

A leader will continue to "lead" only in short prayers. In prayers of more than a few simple sentences, children will cease to follow. A leader will give children much opportunity to give their own spontaneous prayers or to write (or dictate) and read their own prayers. When the leader is doing the praying it is difficult for the primary child to participate actively.

A leader will not try to pray when it is obvious the children are not in the right mood. "Let us pray" becomes "Let me pray while you go on with your more immediately absorbing ideas," if a leader prays just because her plans call for prayer at a certain point.

During the primary years tremendous growth in the child's understanding of and practice of prayer is possible if grownups are alert to offer the child guidance.

### Resources for Primary and Junior Children

*My Own Book of Prayers*, Mary Alice Jones  
*Tell Me About Prayer*, Mary Alice Jones  
*God's Wonder World*, Bernice Bryant  
*Then I Think of God*, Mabel Niedermeyer  
*A Child's Prayers from Other Lands*, Dorothy Gladys Spicer

### A PRAYER FOR PRIMARIES

Thank you, God, for helping us to know that we can be partners with you in making this a happier world in which to live. Help us to remember to be loving to those around us at home, at school and in our neighborhood as well as to those we never see. Amen.

Melba Petersen





*George A. Hammond*

## A PRAYER BY JUNIORS IN VACATION CHURCH SCHOOL

We thank thee that we can feel the wind blowing,  
The wetness of the mist, dry clothes,  
The stillness of the night, the warmth of the sun,  
The coolness of iced lemonade,  
The hardness of stones when we walk on them,  
The smoothness of the pansy's petal.

We thank thee for the perfume of the flowers,  
The smell of new-cut hay,  
Fresh plowing,  
Washed air like after a rain,  
Bread baking and pickles cooking in spices.

We thank thee that we can hear the woodpecker on the roof,  
The animals talking to their babies,  
Wind in the trees,  
Rain on the windows,  
Mother's voice calling us to supper.

We thank thee that we can see colors,  
Red apples, sunsets,  
Blueberries and blue sky,  
Yellow bananas and ripe grain,  
Green grass and green plums,  
The brown thrasher.

We thank thee most, dear Father, for ourselves  
That you have given us sight and hearing and feeling  
To enjoy all the wonderful things you have made.

*Reported by Gertrude Sheldon*

## JUNIOR CHILDREN

The junior's world is rapidly widening, full of exciting new insights, new facts, and new experiences. Every day there come to him new scientific, social and cultural facts. He is

interested in the outdoors, in sports, in scouting and camping. He is interested in reading, in heroic characters, dramatics, exuberant play, acquiring things, and intellectual

challenges. The junior's capacity for sustained attention and his growing interest in formality make possible a range of prayer experience much wider than that of the primary child. The following list shows a few of the many ways prayer may be used with children of junior age:

Unison prayer, read from a board or from individual copies.

Praying together the Lord's prayer.

Prayer hymns.

Individually-read prayers.

"Made-up" prayers, spontaneously offered or written in advance.

Offering prayer.

Litanies.

The call to worship, invocation, and responses.

Sentence prayers.

Prayer, led by one group. (The prayer may be broken up into single sentences to be read by various children in succession. This helps children gain self-assurance.)

Writing prayers as a climax of a worship service or a session or a unit. Each child may have his own paper and pencil and write his own prayer.

Moments of silence to think of God.

Unison benedictions.

If questions about God, the world, its people, problems of sin, the operation of natural laws, have not been faced frankly at each previous stage of growth, or are not now faced without shock or evasion, the junior's prayer life may abruptly end. He will have conflicts which he cannot resolve between facts learned at school and through his own observation of the world around him on the one hand, and concepts taught at home or at church on the other. Dogmatic, not-to-be questioned attitudes on the part of adults regarding God, his world, and prayer may arrest his prayer life.

The guidance adults offer him must stimulate the junior to think for himself. He must be helped until he discovers a vital relationship between God and his startling new world of things and people.

When junior children feel deeply, it is natural for them to pray. Yet in times of deep feeling, they may have difficulty finding words to express their thoughts. They can learn now that prayer is not necessarily spoken; they can think to God.

At this age there can come a growth in the practice of individual meditation and prayer. Parents and teachers should provide inspirational books, music, pictures, and books of prayers and poetry to stimulate and enrich this individual reflection.

*(Continued on page 44)*



# Prayer in the Life of Youth

by Oliver deWolf Cummings

**A** CRUCIAL QUESTION for young people is, "Do we dare to believe in God—that his personal interest in us is the great fact of the universe?" If young people can believe this they are likely to agree with Frank Laubach that "prayer is the mightiest force in the world." And believing this, to dedicate time and thought to making their prayer life effective. This goal becomes a major concern of those who guide youth in Christian growth.

There are great opportunities in the prayer life of youth. For "Prayer is the name we give to the practice of the presence of God."<sup>1</sup> Through prayer young people get beyond the stage of *talking* about religion, they move on to *experience the reality of God*. They carry their deepest longings, their limitations and aspirations into his presence. They are confronted with him. They hear his voice, even though but faintly at first, and seek to do his will.

Junior highs are feeling their own individuality and independence of adult authority. They are beginning to make their own choices. They may choose, consciously or unconsciously, to drop the prayer habits which they have been taught as children. Senior highs are also finding that life is full of many things and that prayer may easily be neglected. Unless there is wise and constructive help available both groups are likely to be confused and troubled by many questions about prayer—"How can I know God hears me when I pray?" "Why doesn't God give me what I ask for?"

There are many misconceptions about prayer which need to be

cleared up as young people reach out for further knowledge and insight. This is the time in life to build solid foundations of faith and experience, to get rid of false notions about prayer, to establish worthy motives for praying, and to make the practice of prayer strong and vital.

## Prayers to avoid

There are types of prayer which parents and teachers may help young people avoid. For example:

1. *The selfish prayer*, for material blessings—"O Lord, give me . . ."

2. *The self-centered prayer*—"O Lord, allow me to have preferred treatment."

3. *The lazy prayer*—"O Lord, take care of the things I can't be bothered with."

4. *The careless prayer*, based upon unconscious errors concerning God's purposes, his nature and his plans—"O God, help our side to win."

5. *The presumptive prayer*, starting with the assumption that we know more than God—"O God, do what I say, grant what I ask."

6. *The misdirected prayer*, intended principally to be heard by others present, to inform or impress an audience.

7. *The indefinite prayer*, dealing in vague generalities, such as "Bless all the sick, feed all the poor, guide everybody, everywhere, in everything."

8. *The mechanical prayer*, using some mechanical method for answer,

such as opening the Bible and pointing at random to a verse.

## Prayers to cultivate

Opportunity should be found to teach young people concerning the varied forms and types of prayer to be encouraged, such as:

1. Prayers of thanksgiving, adoration, reverence, humility, confession.

2. Prayers of meditation and communion—listening to God.

3. Prayers for guidance—seeking the will and wisdom of God.

4. Prayers of intercession for others.

5. Prayers of dedication and commitment.

6. Prayers for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

The regular youth program of the church provides many opportunities to keep junior and senior highs growing and maturing in their experience and use of prayer. These include the planning and leadership of youth fellowship worship services, the informal use of prayer in youth meetings, class sessions, firesides, camps and conferences, participation in the church services of worship. Many parents have been successful in encouraging prayer in the home—grace at meals and the family altar with young people leading in turn, private prayer, and Bible reading. Some parents enlist young people in the use of prayer in the observance of special days and family events.

Special consideration is called for by the needs of young people from unchurched homes and those who have not had full grounding in prayer as children. One leader got a response from his young people when he said, "Let's encourage those with limited experience to make a beginning of praying audibly in the group by sharing our own insight and experience." The "fellowing circle" can be a great help, with each member engaging in audible or silent prayer and signaling by pressure of the hand that he is finished.

## A CALL TO WORSHIP

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving—

Thanksgiving for life, for health,  
For eyes to see, and ears to hear,  
For folk to love, and friends to know,  
For thoughts to think,  
For God to worship.

Enter into his courts with praise.

For the Lord is good. His truth endureth to all generations.

CLARICE M. BOWMAN

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Acknowledgment is made by the author to the Judson Press for materials on prayer adapted for use in this article from his senior high unit "Christ in My Life."

<sup>1</sup>From "The Life of Prayer in a World of Science," William Adams Brown (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons) p. 3.





*Aigner from Monkmeyer*

## Junior Highs Are Practical

Junior highs tend to be practical-minded in their religious life—often quite specific and direct in their prayers. They are confused by abstract ideas and unfamiliar theological terms.

Around the campfire at a junior high camp the prayers are likely to be brief and quite personal, tied up to the events of the day ending and the hopes for tomorrow. Athletics, Christian character traits and ideals, unchristian attitudes or behavior figure in these prayers. Here in the out-of-doors God seems near. In the campfire circle, in the tent or cabin devotions, or in quiet moments of personal meditation it becomes easy to talk to him.

At home or at camp there are personal needs and aspirations which give occasion for prayer. There are failure and success, moods of despair and exaltation, the sense of guilt, the need for forgiveness, the need of a Friend, a Helper and Guide, Someone to talk to who understands and cares and is able to help. There are recurring problems—the acceptance of self, the new urges and desires, feelings of inadequacy, conflicts with parents, fear of ridicule, desire for recognition and acceptance by the gang or the group, the feeling of belonging. Such needs call for reality in prayer.

To find reality in prayer intermediates need the help of their parents. Many learn from their parents how to pray, what to pray about, how to discover God in the ordinary experiences of daily life and in times of crisis. In family prayers and table grace they frequently have an active part. There is also a feeling that God is present and shares in family events and celebrations and that his guidance is sought when special family problems and emergencies arise, that he is a real factor in every choice. Perhaps the family may, from time to time, talk about the nature of God and the meaning of prayer, just as other subjects of interest arise at meals and at other times. Now and then the family may have a time of prayer when on a trip together or on vacation. However in their newfound and growing independence and their desire for privacy boys and girls are encouraged to have their times of personal devotion, as well as to share in family devotions.

Many opportunities arise for sound instruction and vital experience in prayer in the church's youth program. In an intermediate class in a New England Church the comment was made, "Prayer—why that's all bunk!" It was a boy from an unhappy home with an alcoholic father speaking. This started a series of

discussions—why we pray, ways of praying, the results of prayer, the things to pray about. Before they were through the class members had shared several meaningful prayer experiences. The high moment came when the skeptical boy confessed, "Maybe there is something to prayer after all—if you really mean what you say."

One teacher used a Thanksgiving lesson as the occasion to start the practice of having brief prayers in her youth fellowship class. "It seems natural," she said, "to thank God for his good gifts. Let's do it now, one at a time." In a Christmas week fireside at the minister's home, after caroling, another group had a vital experience of spontaneous prayer. Another advisor found that the intermediates responded well to directed prayer when one of their own group was leading.

In a conversation among adult advisers one leader stated, "I have found that our instruction in how to pray must be practical and specific. It's no good unless they actually have a chance to pray in their meetings and planning sessions." Another leader said, "I think stories and illustrations often help to build understanding of the place of prayer in daily life."

The junior high department in a western church planned a three-months' "Adventure in Learning to Pray" when it was discovered that many in the group had never prayed in public. First they had some conversations about what prayer is, why prayer is important, the types of prayer and how we express ourselves in prayer. Then they considered some examples of prayers. Finally they provided opportunity for brief, spontaneous prayers, with most of the individuals in the group participating. Thereafter prayer was a real and natural part of departmental activities and worship services.

An important part of the training of every intermediate is preparation for worship, including an understanding of the place of prayer in the church service of worship. These experiences will be more meaningful if the age group experiences have helped junior highs to get beyond the forms and the surroundings of worship, beyond the planning of worship programs, into a true sensing of the nearness of God.





Minrod

The fellowship prayer circle can be a great help in encouraging young people to pray. Each member engages in audible or silent prayer and signals by pressure of the hand that he is finished.

## Senior Highs Get Discouraged

"Young people are too apt to pray 'gimme' prayers, and when they don't get what they want, to ask, 'Why pray?'" said a high school girl.

This is but one of many reactions which arise from a failure of young people, as they grow older, to reach toward maturity in prayer. To have a growing understanding of God's initiative in prayer, and of the relationship between themselves and God, their prayer experience must be broadened to include vocational interests, boy and girl relationships, personal problems and temptations, intellectual and moral difficulties, how to get along with other people. Their prayer experience must be deepened to include all aspects of their nature—their emotions, their attitudes and loyalties; their thoughts and spiritual insights; their purposes, dedications, and commitments.

Such insights as these may be discussed in youth fellowship classes and other meetings:—1. Prayer is a two-way conversation, involving listening as well as speaking. 2. This conversation is between a finite being, man, and the infinite God, who is wise, loving, just, and powerful. 3. An infinite God can have no favorites—he must treat all with equal fairness. 4. God *knows all*—it is foolish for us to try to impose our ignorance upon

his knowledge and wisdom. 5. God *feels* infinitely more keenly than we do—he is more interested and concerned in our problems and the needs of others than are we ourselves. 6. God always *will*s the right—it is foolish for us to act as though we were seeking to persuade God to do what is right. 7. The laws of nature reveal the impartiality, the steadfastness, the wisdom of God, and his infinite capacity for attending to both small and great things.

In the weekly meetings and activities of the youth fellowship there is a rich environment for an expanding prayer life for senior highs. In this setting their prayers tend to begin with personal desires and needs but gradually to become related to others and to the projects and concerns of the group, and ultimately to the kingdom of God.

Just as one of the laws of life is "without struggle there is no growth," so in the prayer life strength and vitality are supplied when the group undertakes worthy projects which demand effort and require resources beyond their own limited power.

One youth fellowship in a large city discovered this when they set up a Youth Week project in inter-group understanding and cooperation. This involved study and investigation, a

tour of a low cost housing area, exchange fellowship events, work projects, and playground and club assistance. Their committee meetings and planning sessions were given new vitality because their prayers were more realistic and urgent.

Prayer can also have a large place in the worship experiences of high school youth. Energy can profitably be spent assisting young people in the planning and conducting of worship services and in the leadership of devotional periods. It will help if ways are found to discuss the varied uses of prayer—the call to worship, the invocation, the offertory prayer, the pastoral prayer, the benediction, prayer responses, prayer hymns, and silent prayer.

Resources and suggestions for the use of prayer in worship services with junior and senior highs will be found in *The International Journal of Religious Education*, denominational magazines and study discussion units, and in such publications as *Worship Resources for Youth*, David R. Porter; *Young People's Prayers*, Percy R. Hayward; *Devotions for Youth*, Clark B. Gilbert. Helps for young people themselves in their personal devotions will be found in *Power*, *Windows of Worship*, *Gates of Beauty*, *Pathways of Prayer*, *The Upward Call* (Gray), *Some Time Each Day* (Niedermeyer—for younger junior highs), *To Meet the Day* (Church and Ellis); *Your Prayers and Mine* (Yates), and *Everyday a Prayer* (Bro). These materials may be adapted also for use in group meetings.



**I**N THE LOCKER ROOM, four minutes before game time, team members pause and repeat the Lord's Prayer.

In a dormitory room, one fellow falls into bed but the other kneels by his bed to pray.

At her study desk, a confused junior girl pushes books aside and sobs, "Make it easy, Lord. I've got to pass."

In these and a variety of ways, students do pray. The thinking pastor or student worker will often wonder about the motivation of a student's prayer and about the value of the ends for which a student prays. Many times the pastor will find a student whose prayer life is an expression of his deep commitment to God.

Certainly a student faces distinctive problems, but too few are aware of the opportunities for developing a meaningful prayer life in the midst of the peculiarities of a college community.

Students do pray. Many of them, it's true, pray because they cannot help praying. Like persons in all times and places, students cry out to God when they are in need. Confronted with severe privations, illness, destitution, great danger or any cause of hopelessness, men pray. Likewise, students pray when they face their problems.

Actually, very few students now face overwhelming problems, and most students are inclined greatly to exaggerate the seriousness of their "needs." Prayer, in such instances, is hardly a sincere searching after the resources of God, but rather is a crying out for any kind of miracle or sudden aid that will result in rescue. On such levels of experience, the crying out is not really prayer. And the pastor or student worker should say so! These workers know quite well that many students pray for athletic victories, for the outcome of student elections, even for popularity contests and other such aspects of campus life. Workers can help students see when their prayers are less than Christian in nature and spirit.

On entering college, the student's

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# When Students Pray

by Jameson Jones

*Photograph by A. Devaney, Inc.*

first great shock is dormitory life. Often it is the summit of sophistication: artificial, worldly-wise, operating under its own set of standards. Principles which the freshman had unhesitatingly accepted as true are blithely assumed by others to be old-fashioned and prudish. In such circumstances, prayer becomes a most meaningful experience, enabling the student better to achieve genuineness of character and to maintain stability of high standards. The thinking student develops a prayer experience that helps him find wholeness of life in the midst of campus experiences.

What takes place in the classroom and library is the center of the college experience. Students have a distinctive vocation: to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. Glasses lengthen their horizons and deepen their insights. Sometimes these studies bring problems and jolt a student's faith, but they can open new vistas that strengthen his prayer life. The pastor and student worker need to be alert for signs of intellectual turmoil and for opportunities to help the student see his classroom experience from the Christian perspective. What takes place in the classroom may be a problem or a helpful resource.

The college student, like any human being, does face real needs. Not physical needs, particularly, but situations that seem hopeless, frustrations and denials of his hopes and high purposes, problems concerning those he loves, illness, and death. About these he prays.

A student faces problems peculiar to his age and experience. Vocational anxieties, for example, can rise to paramount position. More and more Christian students are praying to God that they may choose vocations in accord with his will for their lives, that he will reveal the way unto them.

At the heart of extra-curricular activity is social life of the campus. More and more students seek God's guidance, especially as dating develops into courtship and one makes life-directing decisions concerning whom and when to marry.

College usually means separation from one's family and home friends. So in prayer one may overcome any feelings of aloneness, finding fellowship with God and lifting up before God one's concerns for family and friends at home.

Maintaining high moral standards, refusing to compromise in times of temptation, speaking the truth when truth is not welcomed, seeking to reconcile hostile persons, helping a roommate through a personal crisis—these are common opportunities in campus life. To be able to accept them requires the inner resource and strength founded in a deep and growing prayer experience.

As they try to pray, some students face real difficulties. Perhaps the biggest one is the clock, for campus clocks keep a terrific pace. Even stu-



dents who arrive at college with definite prayer habits often break them for lack of time. Days seem too short. Students get up just in time to make a class, and at night retire exhausted but with much studying yet undone. Many fine students say there is no time to pray.

A roommate's attitude may make prayer seem silly. And often the social environment of a dormitory or frat house doesn't help. In the midst of class deadlines and all the rah-rah of college, it's too easy to be spiritually dry. How, then, can one pray?

The student, like anyone else, must practice at prayer. Those with a growing prayer life declare that prayer is part of their daily schedule, just as much as classes, meals and library hours. They make time to pray.

For a few moments in bed, just before getting up, the student can offer prayers of praise and thanksgiving. More minutes can be set aside later in the day for longer prayers: of confession, of intercession, of petition; prayers for moral and spiritual guidance; searching for solutions to problems now at hand. One girl uses the minutes it takes to walk

to her first class as a time of prayer. Another student who has to ride an elevated train to his campus in the city uses this time in the midst of the crowd as a time of solitude in prayer.

Many students want a specific place to pray, with enough privacy that their prayers can be spoken aloud. Where privacy is not possible, students can try to discipline themselves to pray silently, no matter where they are.

Growth is the key word in a student's prayer life. College itself means rapid growth in many areas of a person's life; nevertheless, religious stagnation sometimes sets in. The student needs to mature in the vocabulary of prayer, in the choice of occasions for prayer, in his understanding of the nature of prayer, and in his expectations concerning the results of prayer. By the time he reaches college, a person is old enough to face honestly the problems involved in developing a mature theology of prayer.

Here the pastor, counselor and student worker have an important task—to guide individual growth.

One excellent plan is to organize or encourage study groups on the meaning of prayer, techniques of prayer, and attaining maturity in prayer. Cell groups are meeting for Bible study and prayer on many college and university campuses. They meet in homes, churches, student centers, and dormitory rooms.

The adult worker can suggest books of devotion and meditation for students to use. Prayer life grows, many say, as they keep the Bible and a book of meditations by their bed or with their study texts.

Among helpful materials to use are *Power*, a devotional guide written by young people; other devotional manuals such as the *Upper Room*; books of daily devotions by such people as E. Stanley Jones, Marguerite Harmon Bro (*Every Day a Prayer*), John Baillie and others. Margaret Applegarth's story collections are easy to read and very inspirational. *Pathways to Prayer* is by several well known youth leaders. Those who want reading that will stimulate their thinking about specific religious questions might look at the list of Haddam House books. One of these is *The Student Prayerbook* with 250 selections suited to reading aloud. Student magazines, such as *motive* and *Intercollegian* will bring ideas and spiritual food each month.

# Pray Upon Becoming Adult

by William P. Anderson, Jr.

IN EACH PERIOD OF LIFE prayer is essential if life is to be abundant and growing, but in the years of older youth and young adulthood the practice of prayer can lead either to frustration or to glorious fullness and strength. A vital practice of prayer during these years can help a person meet successfully the new situations which inevitably confront him. In turn, moving into these situations successfully can bring with it a depth and breadth of prayer not possible before.

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These years are a time of moving out from relationships in which a person has long found security and has been guided by authority imposed, however gently and lovingly, from without. There may even be an element of rebellion, either against that authority, or against the necessity of leaving the security which comes with it.

This is also a period of moving into new responsibilities and relationships in which a person must establish himself. The period in which tentative decisions can be made and from which he can be rescued if he makes wrong choices, is slipping away. It is a time when decisions

shape one's life permanently. It is expected that marriage will be permanent. When children come a person will forever be a parent. One cannot drift along from job to job with any expectation of making important contributions through his work. The practices with which one begins to participate in community life and the church are likely to be continued.

Some individuals come to these years emotionally immature and unready for the adjustments which must come. Unless they have careful help they may live out their lives with emotional equipment carried over from childhood.



## Older youth reinterpret life

Chronological age does not provide a description of a person's understanding of prayer. The "Now I lay me down to sleep" prayer is quite possibly the place where a leader must begin in seeking to lead older youth to a more mature concept.

The leader must recognize that the most effective teaching comes through actual experience instead of through words about prayer. An adequate curriculum to help older youth learn to pray provides for the frequent use of prayer in their groups led by older youth themselves.

Such prayer experiences are to be closely related to all else that is done, and not simply engaged in as spiritual calisthenics in church meetings. The church's best opportunity for helping older youth mature in their experience of prayer comes as it helps them face decisions and responsibilities.

For example, at this age many of the young people face the necessity of going into military service. These young people of eighteen years through the early twenties were born during the depression, were children during the second world war, and

now face peace-time military training. Their whole lives have been lived in times of crisis and uncertainty. For them prayer can provide resources and power of a kind which will enable them to meet these crises and uncertainties.

Others at this age are making final vocational choices. Some of them have to make compromises with expediency, giving up the unattainable dream of a vocation requiring long and expensive training, for the job that is available now.

Such compromises can be bitter and make it hard to maintain a perspective of life's values. The church must help these persons, in the midst of decision making, to face their situations in vital communion with God.

It may be helpful to remember some of these decisions which must be made by older youth with a great degree of finality:

1. Shall I marry? Whom shall I marry? When should we marry?
2. Shall we become parents? When should we have our children? How many children should we have?
3. What kind of work shall I do? With whom shall I work? To what goals should my work be directed?
4. What kind of citizen shall I be? Shall I vote? Shall I enter military service?

5. Shall I participate in civic clubs and enterprises? If so, in which ones? And for what reasons?

6. What shall I do about the church? Shall I participate actively? Shall I accept my full responsibility? What do I really believe?

Older young people want to find groups in the church which not only provide fellowship but in which they can discuss openly the issues of life vital at that age. They want leaders who are ready to deal with them as individuals as well as in groups. The maturing of prayer must come in close relationship with the maturing of outlook, emotion, and social relationships. The church wishing to help older youth keep on growing in prayer will help the whole person to mature in a spirit of reverence, and to find the meaning of life in the midst of new situations.

## Young adults find a new world

Young adults, single or married, find life taking on a new dimension of responsibility in the church and community. Some of them try to postpone the acceptance of this new dimension. In fact, many of them succeed in postponing it—forever, and live irresponsibly. They feel uneasy in their new world of responsibility and easily use excuses such as: "I'm not sure how long I'll be here—the company may move me, you know."

The church can render a great service to young adults by leading them into the acceptance of responsibilities within the church. A responsible relationship with the church can do much to keep doorways of the spirit opening for young adults and the invitation to an expanding practice of prayer alive.

For single young adults the church can be something of a substitute for the family in religious matters. It can provide groups in which there is free give-and-take about personal religious questions and problems, and prayer groups which are an opportunity for "family worship."

Young adults have made the decisions about many of the questions which gave them uncertainty as older youth. The relationships of vocation, community, church, and citizen-

### luther's sacristy prayer

# O LORD GOD

dear father in heaven, i am indeed unworthy of the office and ministry in which i am to make known thy glory and nurture and to serve this congregation. ¶ but since thou hast appointed me to be a pastor and teacher, and the people are in need of the teachings and the instructions, o be thou my helper and let thy holy angels attend me. ¶ then if thou art pleased to accomplish anything through me, to thy glory and not to mine or to the praise of men, graht me, out of thy pure grace and mercy, a right understanding of thy word and that i may, also, diligently perform it. ¶ o lord jesus christ, son of the living god, ¶ thou shepherd and bishop of our souls, send thy holy spirit that he may work with me, yea, that he may work in me to will and to do through thy divine strength according to thy good pleasure. amen.



ship are present realities to be dealt with. The church must be in the midst of those relationships with young adults if it is to touch their lives where communion with God takes place.

## Young couples live in several worlds

The time of marriage offers one of the most opportune times for beginning family worship, long before the first child has arrived. Unless they have discovered the rich experiences for themselves a couple may have great difficulty in beginning to have family worship after children arrive. When children have come into the family, parents often find it desirable to continue in the form of worship and prayer in which they have been engaged and to arrange for a separate experience in which the whole family can worship together.

Obviously, when smaller children are to be included in family worship the forms must be kept simple and on the child's level. This can provide the parents with a rich experience, but they should never let worship on this level become their only experience in prayer together. They have an adult life to live and need to have opportunity to face God together with their adult problems.

The minister has a unique opportunity to encourage couples to move forward in their practice of prayer, through counseling with them in looking forward to marriage.

Many married persons fail to recognize prayer as an area in which they must be joined. Also, the awkwardness which they feel in trying to pray together causes them to leave out of their married life this most vital element. On the other hand, couples who let each other know what they talk to God about or pray together learn to understand and appreciate each other and can strengthen each other as they strive for a satisfying relationship with God.

Increasingly, ministers bring this matter out into the open for discussion in counseling couples concerning marriage and in young couples' clubs. Some of them offer to visit the new home daily during the first days of marriage to help the new couple establish a regular prayer and



*Marine Corps Photo*

**Many young men face the necessity of going into military training. Prayer can provide resources which will enable them to meet these new crises.**

worship period.

In addition to counseling by the minister, many churches have found that much can be done to encourage couples to have both family worship and private worship by dealing with the matter candidly in groups. Open discussion of it in which families who have succeeded can share their experience with those who are groping has given many couples the motivation to begin. Literature is available

which churches provide free or for sale. Church schools have helped many families start family worship by teaching the children prayers to be used at home and by giving them material to take home.

Just as this period of older youth and young adults is one of rapid change in human relationship and one's position to life it can be a time of significant growth in prayer and in one's whole religious experience.



*Minrod*

**Some pastors offer to visit the new home daily during the first days of marriage to help the young people establish their regular prayer and worship period.**



OUR SUBJECT implies that something may happen to prayer life in the middle years which makes it desirable to examine our experience and perhaps seek new directions.

Prayer in middle life easily becomes perfunctory. We speak of the "habit of prayer" and it may become just that—habit. Or it may fall into disuse almost entirely. However, most Christians would be disturbed at the thought of dispensing with prayer altogether.

If one has settled into some semblance of maturity and life has struck a fairly good balance, prayer may be a daily routine without tension, struggle, or soul-stirring communication. We talk to God but not from the depths of our being; if he replies, we are only half listening at best. Or if we have prayed mostly for health, for strength, for success, and life now seems pretty successful and solid, prayer may become a duty, but not a way of practicing the presence of God.

Some practice prayer without expectation. They recognize its therapeutic value; it is comforting, it satisfies conscience. But there is no eager expectation of power from beyond one's self, no encounter with God.

Prayer seems to some to help make life safe, but not to make the adventure it ought to be. This may be so even for the one burdened with trouble and sorrow. Prayer is hailed as a great resource in time of need, but it is used only as an outlet for complaint and self-pity, not as a way to victory.

### Ways to keep prayer vital

The first thing to say about keeping on praying in the middle years is that we must keep on praying. Prayer is communion. It is telling and asking. It is listening and hearing. It is waiting and it is acting. It is directing our thoughts and praise toward God and it is trying to think God's thoughts after him. It is two-way communication.

This sense of relationship and interaction does not rest, however, solely upon an individualistic response to God, upon meeting him at some pinnacle of loneliness. It depends also upon the kind of relationships one is

# Pray in the Middle Years

by Herman J. Sweet

developing with other persons. "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24)

If for the Christian, relationships with God in prayer have gone stale, one must not only examine his attitude toward God, he must examine his attitudes toward persons. These attitudes may be friendly, comfortable, courteous and kind, but uncreative, undiscerning, lacking in dynamic quality. They may be simply the decent relationships of nice people and not the fellowship of the concerned in which the Spirit of God is always present.

Creative prayer is builded upon great affirmations. One of these is that man may live each day in fellowship with God. But a corollary is that if he would live in this fellowship he must choose to act responsibly in relationships with other men.

Confession is good for the soul. But if confession stops short of critical evaluation of one's relationships with persons, it is likely to be rationalization of the way we like to act. In like manner; intercessory prayer is of little consequence if it does not lead one toward deep involvement in the need of another.

There is no better avenue to the relationships that keep prayer vital than full participation in the life of the Christian community. The Christian who has caught the vision of what it means to participate in the totality of the church's life which is the body of Christ, the agent of God in the world, will find prayer, private and corporate, set in ever large dimensions. When he learns what it means to *be* the Church, linked in time with the followers of Jesus on the shores of Galilee and bound in one brotherhood of love with persons around this earth of every race and tongue, he will find that prayer is the very breath of this unlimited and unending fellowship.

Prayer in middle life may become

non-productive because one is trying to get by on his childhood understanding of God. When life goes hard at forty one cannot pray with confidence to God as he understood him at ten or even at eighteen. If one were to seek to be related to his mother at forty as he was at three or at eight, we would say that he is a case for the psychiatrist. A man's need demands a man's perception of God.

### Prayer in the midst of living

Rewarding prayer demands not only the exercise of praying, but spiritual growth in every way. Vital prayer is at the growing edge of life. It comes alive in the midst of living. Living to the fullest of God's intention makes prayer a necessity.

There is a serious obstacle to prayer among many church members in the lack of effective Christian nurture for adults. Even many of those who attend church more or less regularly are without a sound theology and are woefully ignorant of the broad reaches of Christian faith and action.

Adults who have continued to attend church school often receive teaching in which there is neither encounter with God nor relevance to life. The church that would help its people grow in the practice of prayer must encourage growth in every aspect of discipleship. It must create the conditions for encounter with God and joyful self-giving in a life of praise and service.

### Prayer and Christian vocation

If we would keep on praying we must see that effective prayer cannot long be divorced from action. If we make conscious and intentional our thought of God in terms of the whole of life and not in some neatly framed compartment, we shall have to relate our work to God and bring it into our prayer life.

Nothing would so advance the rediscovery of prayer for millions of Christians as the recovery of a lively sense of Christian vocation. The way one earns a living must come under scrutiny as a service to God and to

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one's fellow men. So must one's actions as neighbor and citizen. It is the whole of life that must be offered up in prayer. God acts in the totality of life and no amount of praying will induce him to deal only with a segment which we wish to surrender.

### Prayer in families

The family in which God is Lord is the best possible setting for prayer. We know that the family is the most important social unit. We know that here interpersonal relations and interaction mold life. We know how important love is; how essential it is to growth, to happiness, to wholesome personality. But by the time we have reached some years into this business of family living we shall have discovered how insufficient human love is for all our needs and those of our children.

Married life requires resources we cannot find wholly in ourselves. Our children need understanding and forgiveness, courage and faith, beyond the best that we can offer. If God is not a part of this family fellowship, how often will we be in despair! And he comes into it best through prayer.

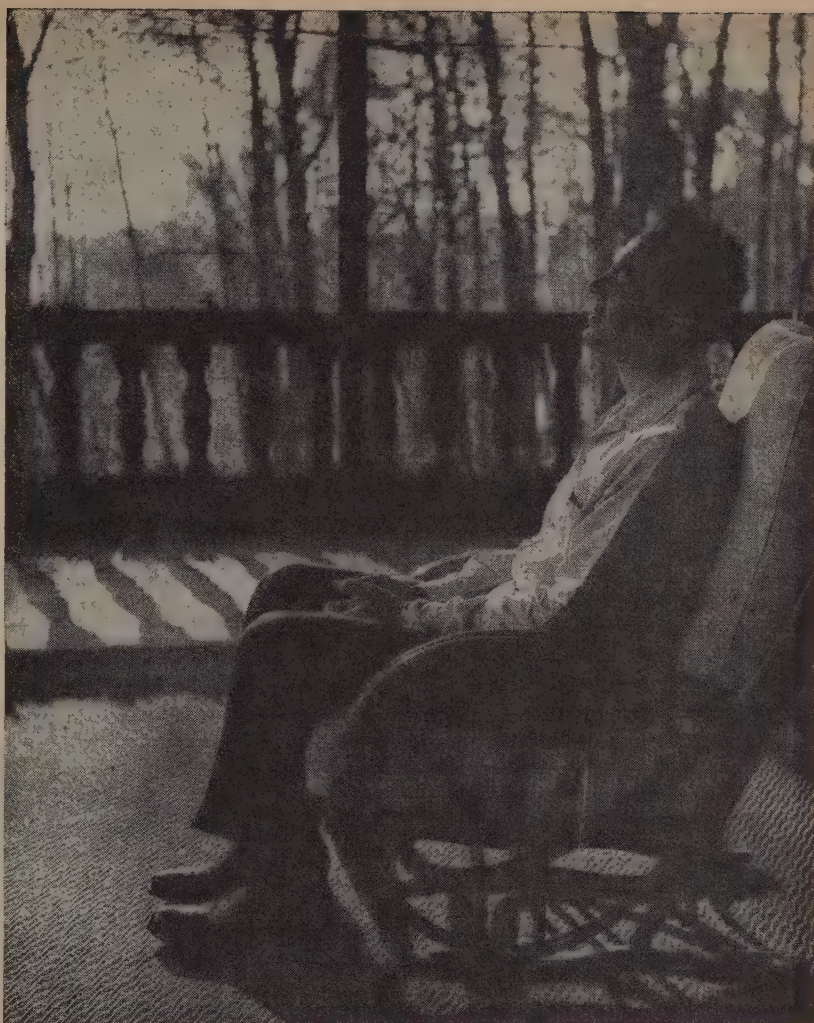
### Ways the church can help

Both for the teacher or leader and for those with whom he works there are practical steps which suggest themselves.

First, there is the prayer fellowship. Small prayer groups are most rewarding when there is intimate sharing of thoughts and feelings, of failures and successes, burdens and concerns. Sharing at the points of deep need uncovers for each his own need and unmasks pretense, complacency or self-sufficiency.

A second way to help persons to revitalize their prayer life is to challenge them to suit their actions to their profession of commitment and faith. The way to see whether or not a belief is worth anything is to try to live it out. When God becomes the companion of each day's walk and conversation, prayer is the focus of the encounter.

A third way to revitalize prayer life is through study and discussion. If prayer is unrewarding it may be that one's theology is static. God is the same yesterday, today and forever, but no man's understanding of God today is sufficient for the demands that tomorrow may bring. All of us need to be disturbed, to be



Aigner from Monkmeyer

## KEEPING PEACE WITH OUR FELLOW MEN

**O Lord, Our Christ, may we have thy mind and thy spirit. Make us instruments of thy peace; where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.**

**O divine Master, grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.**

—St. Francis of Assisi

pushed beyond our depth.

To this end we will find books on prayer and a vast amount of devotional literature available. Books by C. S. Lewis, J. B. Phillips, Elton Trueblood, Lewis J. Sherrill's *The Struggle of the Soul* and *The Gift of Power*, Reuel Howe's *Man's Need and God's Action*, Huess' *Do You Want Inward Power?* are all rewarding. Dealing with prayer directly and comprehensively are two books es-

pecially worth mentioning: *Rediscovering Prayer* by John L. Casteel and *An Autobiography of Prayer* by Albert E. Day.

Prayer in middle life is not simply an individual matter. Since much of the power of the church depends upon the growth and creativity of Christians in the middle years it is a matter of urgency that their sources of spiritual renewal through prayer be abundant.



# When Older People Pray

"Persons who say they cannot pray need to take into their lives interests that are so great and commanding that they will naturally pray about them."

by Leland Foster Wood

*Photograph by Aigner, from Monkmeyer*

IN THE prevalent confusion as to means and ends some people assert that prayer is not an end in itself but only a means. It is in fact both means and end. As communion with the Eternal it comes as near being an end in itself as we can expect anything in this world to be. There is a wise answer in the catechism which says that "the chief end of man is to know God and enjoy Him forever."

While each moment in the stream of experience is in some sense a means toward the next, yet some of these moments yield values so great that we feel that the meaning of life is embraced by them. Prayer moments have in them a foretaste of perfect communion with God, while they have also the function of preparing and empowering us to confront life in partnership with him. Contact with God gives us power and wisdom that we do not have otherwise. Abraham Lincoln said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for the day."

The older years become, for some persons, sombre with endings—retirement from business or profession, loss of friends in death, lessened physical stamina, diminishing sense of being needed. For others it is a time of new beginnings, release of energy into highly selected interests, opportunity to throw themselves into voluntary responsibilities in church and community.

The practice of prayer can be the result of one and at the same time contribute to one's whole outlook at the later years. Prayer injects the vitamins of expectancy into life. When

we lack the sparkle that comes with expectancy our world becomes dull and without lustre. This never happens to people who "expect great things from God," and "attempt great things for God." To such persons life is always an adventure and there are appealing goals ahead.

As we grow older we become more deeply involved in the business of living. Think for example of family life. Whether we have made marriage an achievement or a disillusionment, its roots have gone deeper than we knew when we started out. Young people and young families have come into our lives. There are grandchildren, nieces, nephews and grand nieces and nephews. The family grows, bringing new life. We love them, work for them and pray for them.

Our work is a kind of praying with our muscles and our skills. We also pray for the outreach of our work into the community, and in the same spirit we pray for all whose work is a benefit to others. Praying helps to put our lives in focus.

Part of the teaching function of the church for old people as well as young is to help them know the need and availability of prayer. In church school prayer is sometimes treated as a mere bit of ceremony to "open" the session. It ought rather to be an opening of mind and heart, an adjusting of our lenses to see life clearly, a laying hold of the ever-present power and goodness of God.

Leaders of adult classes should enlist people to pray for the church and sometimes to lead in prayer at the sessions. In our church on occasion laymen conduct the worship service and offer the prayer.

As we pray for our homes, our work, our friends and the people with whom we come in contact, we need also a new fellowship of prayer for the church, with a new quality of churchmanship that exalts the church

as the body of Christ. We need the climate of prayer in its life. Dr. Richard Niebuhr has said that the difference between preaching in church and speaking before various secular groups is that in secular groups you feel that they are wondering what you are going to say while in church you feel that someone is praying for you.

But assistance to older people in their prayer life should be comprehensive. First of all, older folk need to find doorways constantly opening to them for service in church and community. Vast energy is going to waste as these persons are allowed to settle down with the excuse "I've taken my turn." The church can help older persons see the opportunities for new adventure opening to them. The later years can be full to overflowing, with concerns that keep men and women praying and discovering God anew.

Second, the church and church school can give stimulus and direction to prayer by organizing a program of prayer around causes which need support in money, in prayer, and in dedicated work.

Classes, clubs, circles and other groups should have special objects of prayer; persons whom they want to win to Christ, people undertaking great tasks, homes of sick persons and others in special need. Members should also pray for one another. Such praying incidentally creates a better atmosphere for study and discussion.

People who say they cannot pray need to take into their lives interests that are so great and commanding that they will naturally pray about them. The church can help them by confronting them with those causes. These can include specific missionary fields, projects, or leaders; programs of community betterment; young men and women in military service or in college; a building pro-

Dr. Wood was formerly Secretary of the Commission on Marriage and the Home, Federal Council of Churches. He is now retired and lives in Rochester, New York.



gram for the local church; the leadership program of the church.

World relationships will be better when more families on this side of the various "curtains" are praying for those on the other side, and especially when our prayers are implemented by our gifts. In one family they sometimes bring into their worship service various appeals that have come to them and select those to which they can respond. Then they include these various causes in their prayer. So they come into a deeper sense of unity with people in many places and conditions.

A third thing the church can do is to confront people of this age, as all ages, with prayer literature, and even maintain a library of great religious pictures and recorded music to be lent for use in the home. These help to surround one with an atmosphere which encourages communion with God. Interest in these can be aroused through classes and other groups in the church.

In our thinking about prayer the shut-ins are included. Shut-ins can be a great power for the church through their love and prayers. They have little physical strength but access to "all power." One man mourned that illness had compelled him to drop a great work, but by the unseen currents of his influence he was still accomplishing a great work. Even when such persons have to lie awake at night, when they "commune with their own hearts on their beds" their spiritual outreach extends far and wide. "Stronger" people are steadied by knowing that these dear ones who love them are still bearing them up before the throne of God.

In our needs we seek God's almighty aid. In our weakness we come for strength, in our confusion we seek clear light, when life overwhelms us we call for succour, in our gratitude we give thanks for his abundant gifts and in our sinfulness and failure we come "to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need." Our longings become the substance of our prayers and we develop a life-attitude of dependence on God. Prayer becomes an approach to the splendor of the Lord and some lives transmit something of that splendor. So life becomes holy ground and the kingdom of heaven is within us.

## Adoration

O Thou who are the source of all existence and the light of all seeing, we remember with joy and awe that the world is thy creation, and that life is thy gift. Uplift our thoughts from the littleness of our own works to the greatness, the majesty and wonder of thine, and teach us so to behold thy glory that we may grow into thy likeness.

O God, Most High, we thank thee for the vision of thy wonderful works, and for the mind in us that reaches through them to thyself.

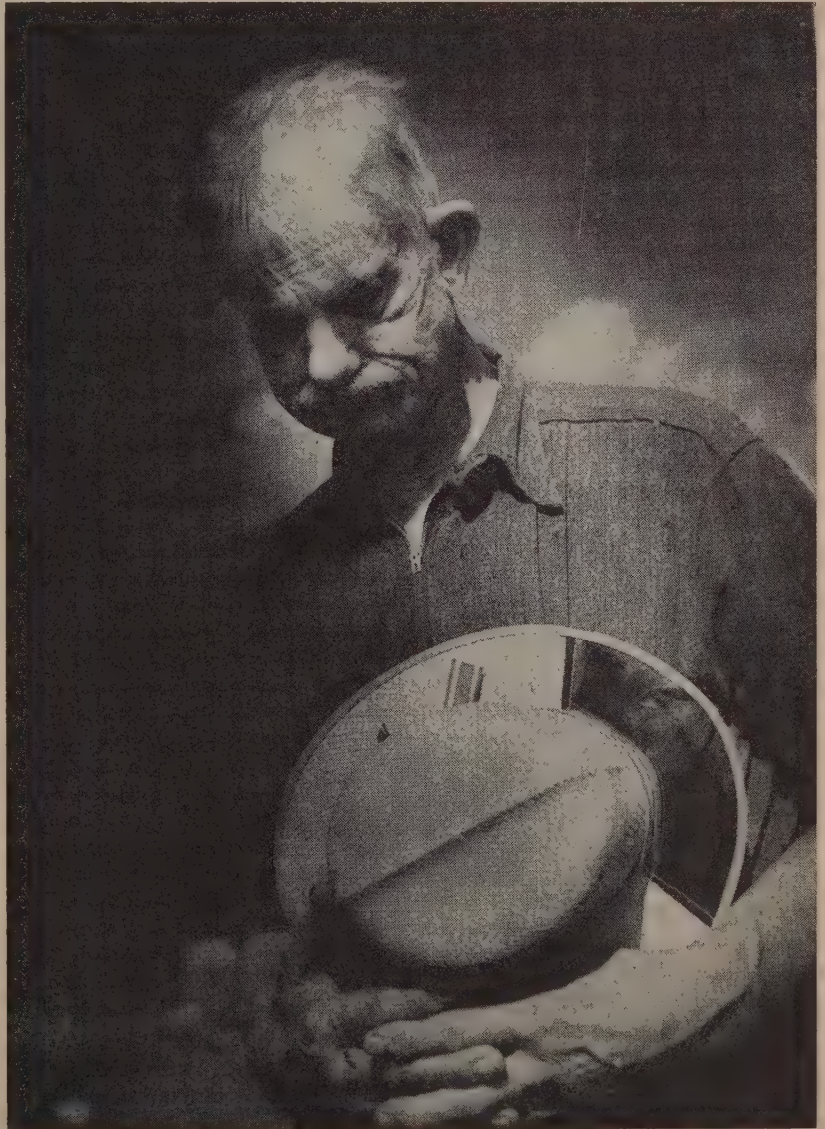
Praised be thou for the glorious sun, for the hills and the valleys, for streams of life that are ever renewed, for the winds and the waters, the air and the light.

Praised be thou for the immensity of the heavens above, and for the sanctity of the law of truth within.

Lord of the spirit, grant that when we behold thee in thy visible works we may have the sublimer sense of thy dwelling in the heart. O quicken within us each beginning of immortal love, and open the way for our spirits into still fairer worlds.

Amen.

*From Six Orders of United Worship*





# When a Teacher Prays

by Peter Gordon White



**A** CHURCH SCHOOL teacher prays because he is a Christian. Prayer is a necessity for a Christian. But when a Christian takes on the gift of teaching there are times when he will pray *as a teacher*. At such moments, when a teacher prays, the customary forms of prayer are likely to reveal particular urgencies.

For example, *praise* is the customary introit to prayer. When a Christian who is a teacher begins to praise God from whom all blessings flow, it is these blessings that are apt to tumble out first: the blessing of life's mysteries, the wonder of the unity of all of life plus the surprise of uniqueness from person to person. The birth of a baby to that young couple down the street is but the latest incident in the world's ancient and honorable pattern; the fact of birth is old. But the baby is new. *This* baby has never been born before. This child is unique, and some day—pray God—he shall come into our church school bringing with him all the things he has in common with all other children in the world, and bringing with him too his uniqueness, his individual potential. A teacher praises God for a job with goals that are always desirable, and results that are never predictable. Praise God for the blessing of life's mysteries.

Then there is *thankfulness*. By its very nature prayer sensitizes the soul with gratitude. A Christian teacher is more than ordinarily thankful for opportunity. It didn't just happen, this opportunity to teach Christ. Others have labored, and we have entered into their labors. There are those who taught us. We thank God for them. There are those who made their Christian witness in times past on the ground where we now stand. They've made it holy ground. There is the company of saints throughout the centuries, those who received in their turn and transmitted in their turn, God never having left himself without witness from one generation to the next. And so we thank God for privileged position—not a pedestal position, but a pivotal one. The faith of the fathers is turned over to the needs of a new generation, and we are grateful that he who bids each new generation come unto him still has many things to say.

When it comes to *confession* in prayer, a teacher has cause to know the righteousness of God. We have been trusted with opportunities. How often we've turned them into problems. Because children and youth have been eager, we've been lulled into thinking little preparation

would do. Because they have been inquisitive, we've fallen back on authoritarian ways—cloaked in the garb of piety. Because youngsters reflected our own poorest attitudes, we've resented their "lack of cooperation." Because the individuals in our class don't learn with mechanical uniformity, but grow at their individual rates, we've been impatient. Because they come to us bearing character traits from encounters at home, in school, at play we complain that we "just can't make sense out of those kids." In the awesome reality of praying a teacher knows what it means to wear the millstone of guilt for offences against these who are little in the faith.

At such a moment, who more than the teacher longs for the restored *fellowship* with God which only prayer can bring about fully? It is at this point that the ministry of Jesus Christ is gratefully appropriated. Even while we are yet sinners God has shown his love toward us in his son. Love has advanced to meet the unlovely. Compassion, that miracle mixture of joy and sorrow, bids us approach the righteous Thou with a filial salutation: "Our father . . . thy will . . . our daily bread . . . forgive . . . lead us . . . deliver us." Through Christ we have fellowship with God. In prayer that fellowship is realized. Not in isolation do we struggle with spiritual ideas and educational principles. Not in estrangement do we go to meet our class. In prayer we find reconciliation with him whose work we do.

Now at last the teacher is at that privileged point of prayer: *intercession*. Now the longings of the heart come pouring forth. The secret plans, the hopes one harbors for one's work in the church school, the people with whom we are associated—other teachers, officers, parents, pastors, members of our own class—one after another we lift them up in our prayer conversation. As happens in all true conversation between persons in full communion with each other, obscure ways become plain, and a great sense of mission dispels confusion.

Could any teacher's prayer close without dedication? The renewed act of surrender is the secret of spiritual power. With no false estimate of one's abilities, but with a full and free consecration of those few talents one has, each of us makes the contribution that is uniquely his to make. And he in whose sight no worthy endeavour is ever overlooked, he for whom every Kingdom enterprise has vast meanings, will establish the work which the teacher has prayerfully begun.

The Rev. Mr. White is Editor of Sunday School Publications, The United Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario.





# Worship Resources

for March, 1956

## Primary Department

by Melba Petersen\*

THEME FOR MARCH: *Stories Jesus Told*  
FOR THE LEADER:

In the parables of Jesus we find stories that children can love and understand with deeper meanings that can challenge an adult's understanding. Primary children are not able to comprehend very much of the symbolism of most of the parables, but there are a few that can be used with them as more than simple stories. An attempt has been made in these worship services to use a few selected parables for enjoyment of the story and interpretation on a level the children can understand.

Hymns used are from *Hymns for Primary Worship*, Westminster or Judson Press.

### 1. Jesus Teaches About God's Care

WORSHIP CENTER: Picture, "The Lost Sheep" by Soord or "A Good Shepherd" by Copping; Bible opened to 23rd Psalm for use later in the service.

PRELUDE: If you can secure a recording of "Sheep May Safely Graze" by Bach, or if the pianist knows it, you might like to use part of it for the prelude.

#### CALL TO WORSHIP:

In the quiet of this place  
Let us think about God.  
Let us think of his loving care for us.  
Let us thank him for Jesus,  
Who taught us how to live.

SONG: "Our Church Helps Us to Worship God," No. 106

#### LEADER:

In our church we hear about Jesus, and from the Bible we can read stories that Jesus told. When people came to hear Jesus there were often children present. Jesus knew that both adults and children love stories, so he often told stories to help them understand what God is like and the way God wants his people to live. During

the next few weeks we are going to hear some of these stories and think about them. From the picture on our worship center you may have guessed what the story this morning is going to be about. Before I tell you the story let us sing our song:

SONG: "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus," No. 82, 1st verse

#### STORY:

##### THE LOST SHEEP

In Palestine, the country where Jesus lived, there were many sheep. Shepherds took care of the sheep. The shepherds knew each of their sheep and often gave them names. They loved their sheep, just as you love your dog or cat if you have one. They would take the sheep to green pastures where they could eat good food. The shepherd would make sure his sheep had water to drink, too.

At night he would bring them all into a sheepfold, a part of the field with a stone fence around it and only one opening. As each sheep entered the sheepfold the shepherd would call its name and pet it. Sometimes the sheep had been scratched on some brambles, and the shepherd would pour soothing oil over the scratch. When the sheep were all safe in the fold, the shepherd would lie down across the opening so the sheep would not get out and no wild animals would get in to hurt them. Jesus must have been thinking of these shepherds and the love and care they gave their sheep when he told this story.

All day the shepherd had been watching his sheep as they ate the green grass at the top of the hill. Very soon it would be dark, and the shepherd began to call the sheep to him. There were one hundred of them, and the shepherd counted each one as it went through the door of the sheepfold. He petted each one and talked in low, loving tones to them. Finally they were all in, but there were only ninety-nine! One was missing. It was one of the smallest sheep, and the shepherd looked about him, trying to see its furry coat on the green grass. But he could not see it

anywhere. Soon it would be dark and the shepherd knew that there were wild animals in the hills which might hurt the little sheep if it was out on the hills alone.

Leaving another shepherd to watch the sheep in the fold, the shepherd went to look for the little lost sheep. He walked all over the hilltop, calling the little sheep, but he could not see it anywhere. Finally he came to the very edge of a steep cliff. This time when he called he heard the answering bleat of the sheep. Climbing over the rocks, he saw the little sheep far below on a grassy ledge. Somehow it had got down the hillside to eat the grass that was there, but it could not get back again.

Very carefully the shepherd climbed over the rocks. Slowly he lowered his long staff with the round end and placed it about the sheep's body. Very gently he pulled the sheep up over the rocks to the place where he was. Then he lifted the tired sheep in his arms and carried it to safety. How glad the sheep was to hear the shepherd's voice and feel his strong arm! And how glad the shepherd was to find the little sheep unharmed!

When Jesus had finished telling the story he told the people that God cares about what happens to us just as the shepherd cared about his sheep. God loves us and cares about us.

SCRIPTURE: There is a Psalm in our Bible that tells us how God loves and cares for us as a shepherd loves and cares for his sheep. (Child's name) will read it for us. (Psalm 23).

LEADER: Let us think about the story Jesus told as we sing our song.

SONG: "Gladly Lift We Hearts and Voices"

#### GUIDED PRAYER:

As we think about God's care for us, let us thank him for it.

We thank God for planning homes and mothers and fathers for us. (Silence)

We thank God for our church where we can learn more about him and his will for us. (Silence)

We thank God for teachers and schools where we may learn. (Silence)

Most of all we thank God for caring about us, wherever we may be and whatever we may do. (Silence)

God, our Father, help us in this quiet to feel your closeness and your love for us. Help us to be loving toward others and to care enough about them to want to be helpful when we can. Amen.

#### OFFERING

RESPONSE: "Bless Thou the Gifts We Bring," No. 172

SONG: "How Strong and Sweet My Father's Care," No. 32

### 2. Jesus Teaches About God's Forgiveness

WORSHIP CENTER: "A Forgiving Father," by Elsie Anna Wood

PRELUDE: "Let Us Be Glad of God's Good Plans," No. 16

#### CALL TO WORSHIP:

Father of all children,  
We come this morning to think about Thee.

We think of thy goodness and love.  
May the stories we hear,  
The music we sing,  
The thoughts we think  
Bring us closer to Thee.

SONG: "Our Church Helps Us to Worship God," No. 106

#### LEADER:

Last week we heard a story Jesus told

\*Chicago, Illinois.



about a shepherd and his sheep. Jesus taught us that God cares about each one of us and wants what is best for us.

Today we are going to hear about a boy who got tired of living at home and went away. Did you ever want to run away where there would be no one to tell you what to do? (Help the children discuss this if your group is small enough. Many children of this age are feeling a sense of independence and are rebelling against home authority. Most of them will mention the fact that running away from an ordered life does not bring happiness.) What would happen if you did run away? Would your mother and father miss you? Would you miss them? Would you ever be able to do exactly as you please?

Before we hear the story that Jesus told let us sing our song:

SONG: "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus," No. 82, verses 1 and 2

STORY:

#### A FORGIVING FATHER

Once there was a man who had two sons. The younger son grew tired of living at home and doing what his father wanted him to do, so he said to his father, "Father, give me my share of property now while I am young and can enjoy it."

His father knew that the young man was restless and unhappy, and he was afraid his son would spend the money unwisely, but he gave both sons their share of his property. Soon afterwards the youngest son took his money and went far away to live.

"At last I can do just as I please," he thought. He spent his money foolishly on anything he wanted for himself. He didn't bother to work, but did just as he wanted to do. Finally his money was all gone. He had to sell some of his fine clothes to buy food, and when he had nothing more to

sell he became hungry. He looked for work to do, but work was hard to find, and finally he had to take care of pigs for a farmer in order to get anything to eat. It was not pleasant work. There was a famine in the land and there was very little food to eat. The work was dirty, his clothes were ragged, he did not even have a good place to sleep.

One day the boy was caring for the pigs while he thought of his home. He was lonely for his father. He thought of the nice home he had, and realized how foolish he had been. "Even my father's servants have better clothes than I have. They have enough to eat and good beds to sleep on. I shall go home," he decided. "I cannot ask my father to take me back as his son after the way I have acted, but maybe he will hire me as a servant."

Early the next morning the boy started off for his home. When he was still a long way off his father saw him and came running to meet him. His father had been lonely, too. He had missed the son he loved and worried about him. His father kissed the young man when he saw him.

"Father, I have been foolish," the young man said. "I have not lived the way you taught me to live, I have spent all my money, and I am not worthy to be called your son."

But the father called to the servants, "Bring the best robe for my son, and bring a ring for his finger and shoes for his feet. Then prepare a good meal and we shall have a happy feast to celebrate, for my son has come home again."

LEADER:

Jesus taught that God is like that father, ready to forgive us when we have broken his laws, and loving us all the time. Several weeks ago we talked about some of the rules God has made for us that we find in the Bible. (Child's name) will read the greatest rule from our Bible.

SCRIPTURE: Jesus said: (Read Luke 10: 27)

CONVERSATION AND PRAYER:

Think together of some of the ways we fail to live up to God's good plans for us by breaking his rules of living.

Base a guided prayer on the suggestions that were made during the conversation period, closing with a brief prayer for forgiveness and request for help in trying to do God's will.

OFFERING

RESPONSE: "Bless Thou the Gifts We Bring," No. 172

SONG: "How Strong and Sweet My Father's Care," No. 32

PRAYER: Read "May the Words That We Say," No. 185

### 3. Jesus Teaches About Loving Our Neighbor

FOR THE LEADER:

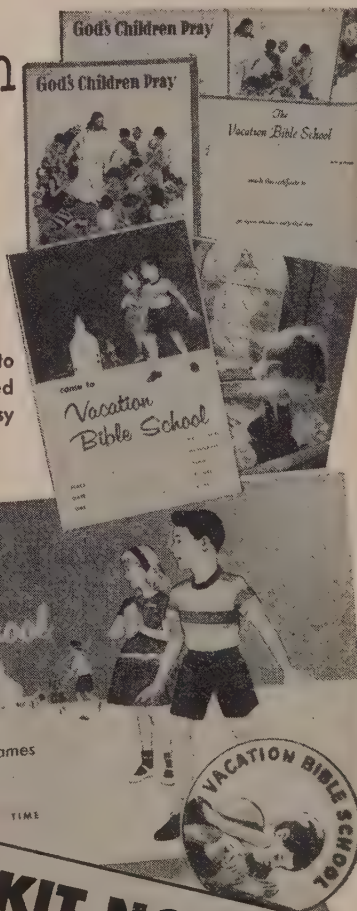
Meet during the week with a selected group of children to pantomime the story of the Good Samaritan as you tell it. To be effective the action must be carefully timed to the telling of the story, with the children realizing that their interpretation must be reverent and quiet so it will be a real worship experience rather than a performance. The use of headresses will give enough of a suggestion of costume for this, and even that much costuming may be eliminated.

WORSHIP CENTER: "The Good Samaritan," by Elsie Anna Wood

PRELUDE: "My Heart Ever Faithful," by Bach, No. 201

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CALL TO WORSHIP: "Come with Hearts Rejoicing," No. 156

SCRIPTURE: I John 3:18; 4:20,21

SONG: "The Loving Jesus Is My Friend," No. 122

LEADER:

Jesus told stories so people would know more about God and how he wanted them to live. But Jesus didn't just tell stories about the way people should live, he lived the way God wanted him to, so people could see the things Jesus did and understand what they must do. Jesus taught people to love each other and showed them by his own love what he meant. Jesus was kind and friendly to sick people, to people who were lonely, to people who were unfriendly, and to people no one else loved. Jesus taught us that it is not enough just to love our friends and those who love us, but we must love all people and show our love in kindly ways. Some of the boys and girls of our department are going to act out a story Jesus told as I tell it to you.

STORY: Read the story of the good Samaritan from Luke 10:30-35 or tell it in your own words as the children pantomime it.

LEADER:

When Jesus had finished telling the story he asked a question: "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" A man answered, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

We aren't going to find people lying beside the road needing our help, but there are many ways we can show kindness to people each day. Sometimes a smile and a friendly "hello" can make your whole day brighter, can't it? Sometimes there are things we can do to help people, like picking up a package that has dropped, or running an errand. We help people in other countries by sending clothing and food to them when they need it. There are many things we can do to be good neighbors if we only remember to try each day to be loving toward everyone.

SONG: "Some Friends of Mine," No. 138

OFFERING: (If you are having a special Lenten giving project you may want to tell the children about it at this time.)

RESPONSE: "Bless Thou The Gifts We Bring," No. 172

PRAYER: Depending on the size of your group you may want all or a few children to give sentence prayers.

CLOSING: "May the Words That We Say," No. 185

#### 4. Jesus Teaches About Growth

WORSHIP CENTER: Picture of a sower, spring bulbs if these are in season.

PRELUDE: "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian," No. 121

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Let us be quiet and think about God:  
About his loving care for us,  
About his willingness to forgive us when we do wrong,  
About his plan for a better world.  
Let us listen as God speaks to us  
Through songs and stories,  
Through the life of Jesus,  
In the deep quiet of our minds.

SONG: "Let Us Be Glad of God's Good Plans," No. 16

LEADER:

Springtime is coming and some of you

are getting ready to plant your gardens. Maybe you have bought your seeds and are waiting for a nice warm day to put them in the ground. Every year at springtime people plant gardens. When the tiny plants begin to grow they care for them, weeding them, watering them when there is not enough rain. In the summer there will be good vegetables and pretty flowers from the seeds that were planted.

Jesus may have been sitting on a hillside watching a farmer sow his seeds when he told this story. The farmers of Palestine would hold the seeds in a pouch made from their long robes. With one hand they would hold up the robe and with the other hand scatter the seeds as they walked up the fields and down. Maybe we could sing our song about the farmer before I tell you the story.

SONG: "See the Farmer Sow the Seed," No. 36

STORY: "The Seed and the Ground"

A farmer went out to his field to sow his seed. Up and down he went, scattering the seed with his hand. He had prepared the ground so it was just right for the seed, but it didn't all fall on good ground. Some of the seed fell on the hard path at the edge of the field, where it couldn't sink down into the ground. The birds gathered along the path and ate the seed that fell there.

A few days later the farmer came to look at his field. Everywhere little green shoots were coming up. Some were taller than others and looked as though they would grow into big plants. But as the hot sun beat down on them the tallest of the green shoots began to wither and die. The farmer knew what this meant. Although the ground looked the same there were some spots where rocks were hidden just beneath the surface. The seed that fell here grew up from the ground, but be-

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cause of the rock below they could not send deep roots into the soil.

Some days later the farmer again returned to his field. Among the green sprouts were other plants pushing up. Some of these were weeds that could easily be pulled up but as he bent over one section of the field the farmer shook his head. Here the tiny plants were being choked away by stubborn thorns. He knew he could never pull up all the thorns and before long there would be no grain in this part of the field.

The farmer cared for his field. God's sun and rain nourished the seed that had fallen on the good ground. One day the field was ready to be harvested. The grain was beautiful and tall. The farmer was happy as he saw how wonderfully the seed had grown.

#### DISCUSSION:

(The children should have a chance to interpret this parable in their own way and you may not wish to say any more than they have said. Or you might say something similar to the following.)

God planned for the seeds to grow. He sent his sun and rain on all the seeds but they needed good soil to grow properly. God has planned laws for seeds and he has also planned laws for us. What would happen if you didn't eat the good food your mother fixes for you? What would

happen if you refused to go to school and learn the things your teacher tells you? What would happen if you didn't live in loving, kindly ways?

God has planned for our bodies and minds to grow. He wants us to be loving and kind like Jesus. But we have to do our part in keeping our bodies strong and healthy, in learning new things, and in being loving and thoughtful.

SONG: "Glad I Am to Live," No. 129

#### LITANY:

For strong bodies and your plan for growth,

*Response: We thank thee, O God.*

For minds that can learn new things each day,

*Response: We thank thee, O God.*

For the knowledge of what you want us to do,

*Response: We thank thee, O God.*

For Jesus, who showed us how to live,

*Response: We thank thee, O God.*

Thank you, God, for your good plan for people to grow stronger and wiser and more loving. Thank you for your loving kindness which is everywhere. Amen.

#### OFFERING

RESPONSE: "Bless Thou the Gifts We Bring," No. 172

CLOSING SONG: "May the Words That We Say," No. 185

questions. Even when some of the men were not sure that Jesus was right, or when they did not agree with him at all, they would always find him ready to answer their questions.

There was a certain scribe who had listened carefully to Jesus' teaching several times, and he decided to be bold and ask a question that he had been thinking about for a long time. Being a religious man, anxious to serve God, this scribe wanted to know what God wanted him to do most of all. One day when Jesus was teaching and several men were arguing among themselves about what Jesus had just said, this scribe hushed them all by asking Jesus his question: "Which commandment is first of all?"

Without hesitating, Jesus replied in the words of the Shema, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one: and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." [Deuteronomy 6:4]

The learned men nodded. "Yes," they murmured to each other, "this man Jesus knows what is right and best."

And then Jesus added something else as they all listened carefully. "The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' [Leviticus 19:18b] There is no greater than these."

There was silence for a minute as the men thought about this new commandment. Then the questioning scribe said, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and that there is no other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

"And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'"

Christians everywhere, ever since Jesus gave this great and important teaching, have lived by these two commandments: love God and love your neighbor, other people, more than yourself.

HYMN: "O Jesus, Lad of Nazareth," No. 82

#### OFFERING

#### DOXOLOGY

QUIET MUSIC AND PRAYER HYMN: Suggest that the children open their hymnbooks to No. 79, "O Master Workman of the Race," and read the words of the first verse silently to themselves as the pianist plays them through. Then all sing the second verse and remain in silent prayer for a moment after that.

HYMN: "Jesus, Christ Jesus, Is with Me Today"

### 3. Jesus Was Not Afraid

HYMN: "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus," No. 47

SCRIPTURE: Mark 14:55-65

HYMN STORY: "All Glory, Laud and Honor"

When Palm Sunday comes, there is a hymn people especially love to sing. It is "All Glory, Laud and Honor," a great hymn that was written more than 1100 years ago by Theodulph of Orleans when he was in prison. The hymn tells the story of Palm Sunday beautifully: how the children and people gathered to sing hymns of praise, waving the palm branches and shouting "Hosanna!" as Jesus, their friend, rode by. The hymn has always been a favorite of children.

## Junior Department

by Jean Louise Smith\*

THEME FOR MARCH: *We Think About Jesus*

### 1. Jesus Was a Friend

HYMN: "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus," No. 47<sup>1</sup>

SCRIPTURE: Mark 10:13-16

#### CONVERSATION AND DRAMATICS:

"Have you ever wondered what it would have been like if you had lived in Palestine in Jesus' day instead of here and now? Would you have been one of Jesus' friends? Would you have been one of the boys or girls who, when you heard that Jesus was in the neighborhood, went quickly to where he was teaching and preaching? What would you have seen and heard?" (Help the juniors to reconstruct what the scene might have been like—on the mountainside, or Jesus teaching from a boat, or in someone's house. Think of some of the stories he might have told. Would the older children have asked questions? Develop the idea of the friendly atmosphere and the freedom to approach Jesus.)

"If you were going to act out some stories of Jesus and his friends, how would you do it? Shall we do it now—perhaps using two stories which we find in the Bible? What two important stories of Jesus and his friends can we choose to dramatize?" (Let the children choose two

and then very informally dramatize them, using the biblical accounts as the basis for the episodes. You might help the children to choose from among these: Jesus and the Children: Luke 18:15-17; The Calling of Four Disciples: Matthew 4:18-22; Parable of the Friend: Luke 11:5-8; Zacchaeus: Luke 19:1-9; A Friend Who Forgot (Peter's Denial): Luke 22:55-62.)

HYMN: "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus,"

No. 47 (Sing one or two verses once again, even though you used it earlier in the service.)

PRAYER: Dear God, help us to remember that Jesus is our friend today, just as he was a friend to the people who loved him when he was on earth. May others know, by our actions and by our speech, that Jesus is our friend. We want to be kind and loving friends to others, too, O God. Help us to do this, Amen.

PRAYER HYMN: "O Master Workman of the Race," No. 79

#### OFFERING

#### DOXOLOGY

HYMN: "O Master of the Loving Heart," No. 83

### 2. Jesus Taught God's Love

HYMN: "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus," No. 47

SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:28-34

MEDITATION: "The Great Commandments"

Wherever Jesus went, he wanted people to feel free to ask him all sorts of

\*A free-lance writer and editor for denominational publications, Ardmore, Pennsylvania.

<sup>1</sup>Numbered hymns are found in *Hymns for Junior Worship*, available from denominational bookstores.



Theodulph was brought from Italy to France by King Charlemagne, to be Bishop of Orleans, a very important position in the Church. But because he was an Italian and not a Frenchman, after his friend the king died, the new king became suspicious and believed that Theodulph was disloyal. So he was thrown into prison. There, he spent his time writing and one of the poems which he wrote was the words of the hymn, "All Glory, Laud and Honor."

Theodulph had many friends in the Church and the choir boys felt especially friendly toward him. Somehow the poem was smuggled out of prison and the choir boys in the churches where Theodulph had been bishop, quickly learned to sing their friend's hymn. They not only sang it in church, but they sang it as they marched in procession around the town. Perhaps that is one reason why it has always been a favorite processional hymn for children's choirs.

HYMN: "All Glory, Laud and Honor,"  
No. 48

#### CONVERSATION:

"In our reading from the Bible this morning we found that Jesus was not afraid when he stood before the high priest for questioning. Many told lies (false witness) against Jesus. Others argued about what he had said and taught. None agreed about what he had said. Finally the high priest decided to ask Jesus a direct question: 'Have you nothing to say for yourself? Why don't you defend yourself against these people?' he asked. What did Jesus do and say? (Ask the children to look it up and read it together in Mark 14:61,62.) 'What happened next?' (Read verses 63-65. Jesus stood among his enemies with no friends around him. He was mistreated, even struck and made fun of, but quietly, and trusting God, he was unafraid because of his faith in God.

HYMN: "There Is a Green Hill Far Away,"  
No. 50

OFFERING

DOXOLOGY

PRAYER: Dear God, when we think about

Jesus we wonder how he could have been so strong and so brave. We wonder how we would have acted if we had lived in his day—if we would have been strong and loyal friends when others were against him. Help us to be his true followers and show our love for him every day. Amen.

HYMN: "Saviour, in the Words I Say,"  
No. 61

#### 4. The Friends of Jesus (Palm Sunday)

HYMN: "All Glory, Laud and Honor,"  
No. 48

##### LITANY OF PRAISE:

Leader: For the friends of Jesus who gave him honor and glory—

Response: We thank thee, O God.

Leader: For the children who loved him and came to hear him teach and listen to his stories—

Response: We thank thee, O God.

Leader: For the joy, the healing, and the friendship Jesus gave to the people of his time and brings to us now—

Response: We thank thee, O God. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 21:1-9

OFFERING

DOXOLOGY

STORY:

##### A FRIEND OF JESUS'

If you were to visit the Washington Cathedral in Washington, D. C., you would see two reminders of Joseph of Arimathea, the rich man in whose garden Jesus was buried. One reminder is a beautiful chapel named for him and the other is a large and lovely tree called the Glastonbury Thorn.

On the wall behind the altar in the chapel is a mural painting which pictures the friends of Jesus carrying his body to the tomb in the garden. The chapel itself is impressive with great, thick pillars and rounded arches. But it is the thorn tree that interests us most because of the beautiful legend about it.

People like to tell stories about those whom they love. And so, because Joseph

of Arimathea was friendly toward Jesus, many legends or imaginative stories have sprung up around him. It is said that he became a loyal follower of Christ and braved hardship and danger to bring Christianity to England.

The legend goes that when Joseph of Arimathea was in Glastonbury he thrust into the ground his great staff, on which he had leaned as he walked many, many miles to teach and preach. And lo, a miracle happened, for it took root and grew as a tree—a kind of Christmas blossoming, the people called it. Because of this, Joseph of Arimathea established a small church which ever since has been thought of as a "parent church" to many others.

A branch of this great tree of Glastonbury, which some believe is the same tree that sprang from the staff, was cut and rooted and brought to America where it

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was planted in the grounds of Washington Cathedral to remind all the people that love and friendship never die. Surely, whether the legends about Joseph of Arimathea are true or not, they are im-

portant because they speak of the love and loyalty of Jesus' followers both in his day and for all the hundreds of years since then.

HYMN: "There Is a Green Hill," No. 50

Now make us strong; we need Thy deep revealing  
Of trust and strength and calmness from above.  
CLOSING HYMN: "Sweet Hour of Prayer"

## Junior High Department

by Gladys Jackson\*

THEME FOR MARCH: *Christ's Teaching about Prayer*

### To the Leader

Too often prayer is an unexplored mystery for young people because they have too little opportunity to experience prayer. During this month let it be your purpose to lead them into meaningful experiences of prayer. Undergird these worship services with prayer yourself that they may be used to help junior highs understand more fully the need for prayer, the power of prayer and their dependence upon prayer in their daily lives.

If possible, use a copy of Durer's "Praying Hands" as your worship center during this entire month. If this picture is not available, omit paragraph two under the "Leader's Introduction" in session one.

### 1. Christ's Example in Prayer

PRELUDE: "Sweet Hour of Prayer"

#### LEADER'S INTRODUCTION:

The hymn which has just been played for our prelude reminds us that prayer is a privilege which allows us to bring all the things that are close to our hearts to God who hears and answers prayer. Only a God who loves the people he created would want them to be able to commune with their Creator in a two-way communion.

The picture which you see before you and which will be used as our worship center during the entire month has a story to tell. According to a legend the artist drew the hands of a friend who sacrificed his own career in art so his young friend who had more talent than he could study. The hands show the results of hard labor, but they were hands that were used sacrificially. These hands clasped in prayer express a kind of universal need and desire of men to speak with their Lord.

People of all ages have prayed to a being higher and more powerful than they. There seems to be an inborn desire in all people to reach out beyond themselves for strength, power, protection and guidance. People who have not even known the one true God have prayed to gods of their own creation. Usually this kind of prayer was born of fear rather than of love. When we pray to our God, we do it because of love for him, and we believe that he hears and answers our prayers because he loves us.

When Christ lived on earth, he demonstrated clearly his own dependence upon prayer by his frequent use of prayer, both when he was alone and when he was surrounded by people.

Let us see what we can learn about Christ's prayer habits from a study of how and when he himself prayed.

#### FIRST SCRIPTURE AND COMMENT:

##### APART AND ALONE

Matthew, in his Gospel story, tells of the feeding of the 5000 people who had come to hear Christ preach. Matthew concludes the story in this way. (Read Matthew 14:22-23.) In being with so many people and in preaching to them so earnestly, Christ had "emptied himself" and needed some time apart, alone with God, his Father, to refresh his spirit so he could continue to feel close to God and lead others close to him.

If Christ, God's Son, needed to pray in order to keep close to God, how much more do we need some time apart, alone with God, to strengthen us for our daily living. We need to find time each day to refresh ourselves in God's presence, alone with him, so we can relax in his love, and find strength in him.

HYMN: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"

#### SECOND SCRIPTURE AND COMMENT:

##### MUCH TIME IN PRAYER

(Read Luke 6:12.) The Gospel accounts are full of references to times when Jesus prayed. Often we read that he went to the wilderness or to a solitary place. The reference I have just read shows that he continued in prayer for long periods of time. In this case he spent the entire night in prayer. This night preceded a very full day, during which he chose his twelve apostles, healed many people and preached his great Sermon on the Mount.

God had great things for Christ to do. In order to do God's will for him, he spent a great deal of time in prayer. Do you think he could have been asking God's guidance in selecting the men who were to be his closest associates, those who were to carry on his work after the crucifixion and resurrection? Do you see any connection between his night spent in prayer and the great sermon he preached? Isn't there a great contrast between Christ's spending a whole night in prayer and our spending two or three minutes before we go to sleep?

Much of Christ's power came through prayer. Are we using that same source of power or do we act as if it isn't there?

#### PRAYER:

(This time of prayer should be announced as a time of silence to be interspersed with such verses as found in the hymn "Mid All the Traffic of the Ways" and the stanza printed below:

Now, Father, now in Thy dear presence kneeling,  
Our spirits yearn to feel Thy kindling love;

### 2. "When You Pray"

PRELUDE: "I Would Be True"

#### CALL TO WORSHIP:

I would be prayerful through each busy moment;

I would be constantly in touch with God;

I would be tuned to hear the slightest whisper;

I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod.

#### LEADER'S INTRODUCTION:

If you were to look through the New Testament you would no doubt be surprised that few of Christ's prayers are recorded in the Gospels. However, as we saw last Sunday, there are many references to his dependence on prayer in his daily life. Also there are several references to times when Christ taught about prayer. Today we will consider three of his statements about prayer.

#### FIRST TALK:

"PRAY TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN SECRET"

One of Christ's most important teachings has to do with why people do things. He cautioned his followers that they should do things that were pleasing to God, rather than trying to please men. He applied this truth to our giving and to our service, saying, "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." He followed that with some very practical advice about prayer. (Read Matthew 6:5-8.)

Notice that Christ does not begin his statement by saying *if* you pray, but *when* you pray. He takes for granted that people will turn naturally to God in prayer. He was trying to tell his followers that their prayers were addressed to God in secret and that they were not to try to impress other people with their prayers.

Also he seems to be saying that our prayers can be very simple. God is not impressed with big words and pious phrases, but with the sincerity of our prayers.

#### POEM:

Lord, for tomorrow and its needs I do not pray;

Keep me, my God, from stain of sin, just for today.

Help me to labor earnestly, and duly pray;

Let me be kind in word and deed, Father, today.

Let me be slow to do my will, prompt to obey;

Help me to sacrifice myself, Father, today.

Let me no wrong or idle word unthinking say;

Set Thou a seal upon my lips through all today.

Let me in season, Lord, be grave, in season gay;

Let me be faithful to Thy grace, Father, today.

So for tomorrow and its needs I do not pray;

Still keep me, guide me, love me, Lord, through each today.

SYBIL F. PARTRIDGE

\*Miss Jackson is Director of Christian Education, First Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg, South Carolina.





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## SECOND TALK:

### "PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU"

Most of us pray for the people we love, and feel rather proud that we remember to pray for someone other than ourselves. Also most of us hate our enemies and would never think of including them in our prayers.

However, Christ says that is not the way it should be. Listen to these words from the Sermon on the Mount. (Read Matthew 5:43-44.)

As we pray for people who wrong us, those who are our enemies, perhaps we can come to understand them better, and in understanding them turn them from enemies into friends.

God, who made us, loves us all and wants us to live in peace and love with each other.

POEM: "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire." (Read the words of this hymn.)

## THIRD TALK:

### "PRAY AND FAINT NOT"

Sometimes we pray once and if we do not know that God has answered our prayer we give up. Christ had something to say about that, too. (Read Luke 18:1.)

We need to continue praying, knowing that God will always answer prayer. Our failure is in not recognizing his answer. He knows our needs so much better than we do, and his answer is always wise and just and loving.

Sometimes the answer is "yes," sometimes it is "no," and sometimes it is "not now." Let us pray, expecting an answer and being willing to accept God's answer as the right answer for us.

## CLOSING PRAYER:

Day by day, Dear Lord, of Thee

Three things I pray;

To see Thee more clearly,

Love Thee more dearly,

Follow Thee more nearly,

Day by day. Amen.

## 3. "Forgive Us"

### CALL TO WORSHIP:

O Thou, by Whom we come to God,

The Life, the Truth, the Way;

The path of prayer Thyself hast trod:

Lord, teach us how to pray!

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-15

### MEDITATION:

There is a simple beauty and strength about this prayer which Christ gave his disciples in answer to their request, "Lord, teach us to pray." The section that deals with forgiveness is very practical in its application. Christ says very clearly that we will be forgiven in direct proportion to the way we forgive others. If we forgive, we will be forgiven; if we don't forgive, God will not forgive us.

Think how little the things are we have to forgive: an angry word someone spoke; a snub, either real or imagined; some hurt, either physical or social; a lack of understanding. Now think of the things God has to forgive in us: pride, snobbishness, greed, carelessness, thoughtlessness, selfishness, lack of concern, unfriendliness, envy, jealousy and hate.

How great is God's love that he can forgive our every sin and continue to love us even when we are unlovely.

### LITANY OF PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS:

(Ask the group to use the response, "Forgive me, Lord," after each petition

expressed by the leader.)

Leader: When I am more concerned about myself than others,

Group: *Forgive me, Lord.*

### Leader:

When I am so proud of what I have that others are made unhappy,

When I choose friends only for what I can get from them,

When I forget to be thoughtful of people who are older than I,

When I overlook the timid attempts of people trying to be my friends,

When I let hate blind me to the good qualities of others,

When I envy another's success where I have failed,

When I have neglected opportunities to do the little nice things that would make others happy,

When I keep quiet rather than speaking out for the right,

When I spread rumors about things that will hurt other people,

When I let my worst self triumph over my best self,

When I forget that I must forgive if I am to be forgiven,

In the name of Christ, who forgave freely, Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 23:13-25, 32-37

SOLO: Second stanza of the hymn, "Alas, and did my Saviour bleed"

Was it for sins that I have done

He suffered on the tree?

Amazing pity! Grace unknown!

And love beyond degree!

Tune—*Martyrdom*

### MEDITATION:

Where can such love be found as that displayed by Jesus on the cross? In the midst of physical pain and suffering, of spiritual anguish, Jesus voiced his forgiveness of those who were responsible for his death. His cry, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," shows his self-forgiving, sacrificial love for all people.

If you had been in his place, could you have prayed the same prayer?

SILENT PRAYER: (pray that the forgiving spirit of Christ may be ours)

### SPOKEN PRAYER:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, let me sow pardon;

Where there is doubt, let me sow faith;

Where there is despair, let me sow hope;

Where there is darkness, let me sow light;

Where there is sadness, let me sow joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may seek not so much to be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

## 4. "Not My Will, But Thine, Be Done"

PRELUDE: "Sweet Hour of Prayer"

HYMN: "O Gracious Father of Mankind"

### LEADER'S INTRODUCTION:

Most of us are very self-centered people. When we pray we are mostly concerned with what we want God to do for us. We forget that we are often not wise enough to know what we should pray for. We tell the Lord what we want and that finishes our prayer. We ignore the fact that God has created us for a purpose and that if we are to fulfill that purpose we must be guided by his will for us. When

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he made us, he gave us a will of our own. However, it is only when we are willing to make his will our will that we let God work out his purposes in and through us.

Since Christ was the Son of God, it is hard for us to think that he would have the same struggle to make his will God's will that we have. Luke describes the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane with such vividness that we almost feel that we are there too. As you listen to the reading of this familiar passage, let yourself feel with Christ the agony of the prayer he was praying to God.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 22:39-42

VOICE I. Are we willing to seek God's will rather than following our own selfish desires?

VOICE II.

If thou but suffer God to guide thee,  
And hope in Him through all thy ways,  
He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee,  
And bear thee through the evil days;  
Who trusts in God's unchanging love  
Builds on the rock that nought can move.

VOICE I. Can we be sure that God will make his will known to us?

VOICE II.

Only be still and wait his leisure

In cheerful hope, with heart content  
To take whate'er thy Father's pleasure  
And all-discerning love hath sent;  
Nor doubt our inmost wants are known  
To him who chose us for his own.

VOICE I: What is our part in knowing and doing God's will?

VOICE II.

Sing, pray, and swerve not from His ways;  
But do thine own part faithfully;  
Trust His rich promises of grace,  
So shall they be fulfilled in thee.  
God never yet forsook at need  
The soul that trusted Him indeed.

GEORG NEUMARK

LEADER:

Those who find most joy in life are those who have earnestly sought God's will. Theirs is not an existence of fear and dread, but rather a joyous acceptance of life as it comes.

Paul put it this way in his letter to the Romans: "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose . . . What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us?"

CHORAL RESPONSE: "Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" (stanza 4)

PRAYER HYMN: "Draw Thou My Soul, O Christ"

task, this planning for worship. We salute you with John Oxenham's words to a valiant soul starting a difficult mission: "May God go with you, Great-Heart!"

## 1. The Church's One Foundation

HIS LIFE AND OURS

(For this meditation, a good picture of Jesus may be central, or projected on the wall above the participants. The Reader stands to one side, holding open Bible. The Leader is opposite, perhaps holding a picture of a modern church: even your own.)

Leader: Why do we have churches today? Not simply for our own benefit, to give ourselves a place to worship and serve and meet new friends. Not simply to baptise us, or marry us, or bury us. We have churches today because a Man came and lived among people to show them what God's love was really like. . . . and to show also what a joyful, understanding, loving human life could be like.

He had just started, really, when they took him to a hill and . . . you know the rest of the story. But what about the "rest" of his story—the work he began? What tasks are still unfinished today?

He made it clear at the beginning of his ministry what he came to do and why—

Reader: Luke 4:16-21.

Leader: And that is just what he began. He went about the streets of villages, healing sick ones, helping blind ones to see. He tried also to help people get over the spiritual blindness that comes from hate—curtains in the soul, and causes people not to see the good in others who may be different. He tried to show people that justice in actions must spring first from love in the heart. In the crowded ways in our towns and cities, people have exactly the same kinds of needs. What would he say are our unfinished tasks?

Reader: Matthew 20:25-28. (Silent thought)

Leader: Through little stories called parables, he showed exactly where responsibility rests.

Reader: Matthew 25:31-40.

Leader: We may be tempted to excuse ourselves by saying that we have racial and cultural divisions today. But in Jesus' day, did not the Jews and Samaritans have a cruel "curtain" of misunderstanding between them? Jesus knew no barrier. He told about one who overcame it. What peoples would he use for illustration today?

Reader: John 4:6-15. (Silent thought)

Leader: Jesus organized no church, built no building, set up no committees. But his life of unselfish service touched others to want to do likewise. His bands of followers, down through all the ages, have stood for kindness to the suffering, courageous goodwill in difficult situations, love that melts barriers. People who set out to try to follow in these ways he lived, join together in a "church."

Reader: John 15:8-15. (Silent thought).

Leader: Our world today has multiplied problems, much sorrow. More than ever, the call goes out—who is willing to live again as he lived? For only through such lives can love replace hatred, goodwill replace war, and a new day of dawning brotherhood begin.

Reader: Revelation 21:3. (Silent thought, followed by prayer)

MY PRAYER

The world has yet to see  
The beauty of a life  
Made wholly Thine.

# Senior High and Young People's Departments

by Clarice M. Bowman\*

THEME FOR MARCH: *The Church Is God's Abiding Place*

## For Worship Planning Committee and Counselor

May our thankfulness rise this month for the Church: our own "home" church where we meet each Sunday, and churches everywhere. Some in the group may be preparing to join the church on Easter. May these meditations be for them helpful preparation. One of the members of the department may have joined earlier. May these meditations be for them renewal.

Watch one danger as you plan. In building meditations on Church, it would be easy for us to stop with merely *thinking about Church*. (That is the danger of working with any theme.) True worship must be centered, not in a subject—even one with a divine reference, as Church—but in God the Father. The basic "theme" for all worship should rightly be: *finding God and being found of him*. How lift our thoughts, then, to the worship-level?

Three ways: (1) we can be thankful for the Church and all it has meant in our own lives and growth to this very day; and we can be thankful for the heroic lives of centuries past who have lit flames

of goodness across the earth, and who light a spark within our own dreams for what we may do in our day. (2) We can pray intercessory prayers for persons encircling the globe, working tirelessly and selflessly through church auspices that God's kingdom of love may come. (3) We can face forward fearlessly ourselves, asking what God's dream for his Church demands of us, and make our dedication anew.

A note about planning: as suggested each month in this series, we give you here a number of ideas and aids from which to choose. Try to let your thoughts be directed by the living Spirit of God, as you plan. You will not be bound by a set pattern, a rigid program. Use such hymns, settings, thoughts as seem fitting to express your group's inner needs. Isaiah's progression of experiences (Chapter 6) will furnish outline for your "order of service," at any time.

First, then, we offer you some "core" thoughts. Let these touch off still others in your own thinking. How about jotting down your ideas, meditations, illustrations, poems, prayers—maybe hymns? Second, we have included some general aids: Scripture references, hymns, suggestions for setting, prayers.

It is a big, breath-takingly important

\*Assistant Professor, Department of Religion, High Point College, High Point, North Carolina.



Dear God, on bended knee,  
My all to Thee I give;  
Make that life mine.

ROSALIE CARTER<sup>1</sup>

#### THOUGHTS OF A YOUNG CHURCHMAN

*Thoughts of an average person:*

We live in a dark and discouraging hour.

Evil is so prevalent that one life cannot possibly make a difference.

So many persons have wronged me, why should I not hate back?

Jesus' teachings might work in some far-off future, but not now.

*Thoughts of a young Christian:*

Jesus' time was tense and difficult, too, but love worked then.

Jesus kept always his boundless faith in God, and through prayer always found strength for each day.

Jesus prayed for those who wronged him . . . and kept loving them.

Jesus flung his whole self into living by the will of God, utterly regardless of consequences. There was no holding back.

Jesus bade his followers be—not half-way, or partly—but wholeheartedly perfect. He said nothing about giving in to the problems of the times.

PRAYER: O God, draw me back from silly excuses and apologies, and grant me courage and wholeheartedness to live in my day by God's will, too! Amen.

THAT MY LIGHT MAY SHINE STRONGLY

The legend of "the Church of the lighted candles" reminds us that each one's light makes a difference. The little Alpine village church had no lights, until the people came, each bringing his own lantern—and then what radiance!

Church members today who fail to watch the quality of their daily lives, spread darkness rather than light; become stumbling-blocks to others seeking the Way. What of ourselves as youth?

I pray for health of mind and body.

Thou hast given me a temple to live in and to do with.

Let me keep it pure and holy.

I pray for good works in thy name—

missions, schools, hospitals, and many more.

Give me strength and a will to share. When I fail to toe the mark of Christian service—

when I drift into unclean ways . . . when my example is not thy example,

Father, forgive me, for I know not what I do.

Am I selfish in my prayer, Lord?

Do I pray for vain, personal gains? If I do, please answer, "No."

Lord, teach me humility.

DON MARSH<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Used by permission of the author, who dedicated the poem to Julia Lake Kellersberger.

<sup>2</sup>In *Power*, November 1, 1948. Used by permission, National Conference of Methodist Youth.

Sometimes I ask anew the old question, "Does it pay to be good?" "Shall I hold to my idealism and reap censure, or shall I follow the gang and taste glory?" As a young churchman, I remind myself that if my life is on God's side I cannot be defeated. Money, property, popularity may be taken away, even my life. But I shall still be victor, for I move with him who has overcome the world.

PRAYER: O God, I want a faith like that!

One to keep me going when things around me are cracking up! Give me faith to see that thy way is triumphant. Teach me to walk confidently in thy way, daily. Amen.

TODAY IN CHURCH

(Read Psalm 62:5-8) What do you expect when you enter church to worship today?

Do you look forward to inspiring music and stirring hymns? Do you anticipate moments of silence in which those about you sit in hushed awe? Do you await a moving prayer in which the very richness of the words, or perhaps the simplicity of the delivery, brings conviction of the leader's earnestness? Do you expect to arise again, strengthened in your convictions, assured that this must be the way?

Is this all?

Or do you expect to meet God?

To come face to face with the underlying reality of the universe that makes us see the shabbiness of most of our daily routine?

To pass through the kind of experience that would drive the writer of Hebrews to say, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"?

To struggle with the moral darkness within your own soul as Jacob wrestled with the angel, and to arise a better person?

To find at last that overwhelming love of God that brings assurance of divine forgiveness and sends us forth seeking incessantly to share that love with all mankind?

Prayer: Father, today, let me meet thee in worship. Amen.

CHARLES B. PURDHAM<sup>3</sup>

## 2. An Endless Line of Splendor

We begin to think of others since the Master who gave themselves utterly, wholeheartedly for the Faith, regardless of consequences. We look back through history and find them—"an endless line of splendor."

LUTHER STANDS

Time: a late afternoon in April, 1521.

Place: the first imperial diet of Charles V, at Worms.

Stillness reigns a moment in the great court chamber. The quiet figure of a monk, his eyes burning in his wan face, stands before the young emperor and his

<sup>3</sup>In *Power*, January 7, 1951. Used by permission, National Conference of Methodist Youth.

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We remember famous men—  
Washington, Lincoln, and others



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—John 8:12

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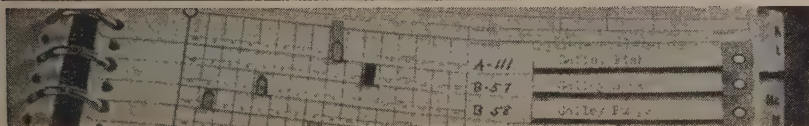
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cohorts in their rich robes. On the table before them are stacked a number of books. To the left of the emperor stands Dr. Johann Eck. Pointing to the books, Dr. Eck speaks: "Martin Luther, will you or will you not retract what you have written?"

Luther takes a step forward. His loose, drab robe swishes powerfully, and his strong voice rings out: "I cannot and will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience." His eyes sweep over the bishops, the archbishops, the red-caped cardinals, the emperor, the princes in their black silk and brocade, the noblemen, the mighty ones of his world, who have his life in their hands.

"Here I stand. I can do no other! May God help me. Amen!"

GLADYS H. BARR<sup>4</sup>

### ON A NEW CONTINENT

Jesus' Great Commission, "Go ye," was translated in Wesley's words to George Shadford, "I turn you loose, George, on the great continent of America. Publish your message in the open face of the sun, and do all the good you can."

But the going was rough! Thomas Coke said, "Often we rode 16 or 17 miles without seeing a house, or human creatures but ourselves, and often being obliged to ford very deep and dangerous rivers." Why did they do it? A sense of urgency had gripped them. There were people to be helped, a gospel message to be preached. God was depending upon them! As in F.W.H. Myers' poem, St. Paul is telling about his eagerness to share the good news—

Then with a rush the intolerable craving  
Shivers throughout me like a trumpet-call—

Oh to save these! To perish for their saving,  
Die for their life, be offered for them all.

F. W. H. MYERS<sup>5</sup>

Henry Smart was one who felt the call as a young man. He describes how the bishop called for volunteers "to go to Kentucky and fixed his eyes upon me as one. I said, 'Here am I. Send me.' I was ordained in a private room and in a few hours after my ordination, John Wilson and myself were on horseback and on our way."

They followed as merciless a calling as brave men ever knew. Long weary hours riding through rain, sleet, snow, and hail; nights in the open in danger from beasts and from savages; loneliness, sickness, privation. But the unspeakable joy of helping blaze trails for God's churches in this wilderness!

### BEYOND THE LINE OF DUTY

In the heart of Africa's Lambarene forests works a gentle, simple, gay man—one of the world's greatest minds, some of the world's most skillful fingers ever to interpret Bach's music on the organ or to wield a surgeon's scalpel, and one of God's happiest personalities. When young Albert was growing up in Alsace-Lorraine, a statue of a Negro slave made a deep impression; and he purposed, "Somebody must atone for the sins of white men against all black men." Then quite simply, he made answer, "I, Albert Schweitzer."

When asked, as a young man already

<sup>4</sup>From *Monk in Armor*, Abingdon Press, 1949. Used by permission.

<sup>5</sup>From *St. Paul*, The Macmillan Co., Ltd., London, 1908, p. 34. Used by permission.

world-famous for his theology and his music, why he gave these up to practice medicine in a mission, he answered again quite simply, "I wanted to be a doctor so that I could convey a message of love with my hands... talk is not enough."

Newspaper men were interviewing him at a Chicago railroad station. Suddenly he was missing. He had noticed a little old lady struggling with her suitcases, and quietly went over and carried them for her. He lives his "reverence for life."

### 3. The Kingdom is Coming!

#### MESSAGE OF THE COUNTRY CHURCH

The country church grows out of the ground and sweeps toward the clouds. Her upreaching walls and spires, linking earth and sky, are plain for all to see. . . . The tones of the bell in her tower ring out clear and far across the open fields . . . the country church heralds the good news: "The earth and the heavens are the house of the Father everlasting, and all ye are his children. Worship him in sincerity, and love one another as becometh the family of the Lord. So shall ye have abundance in your fields, joy in your homes, and peace within your borders."

This is the song of the spires against the sky: Love one another! Nurture in yourselves the generosity of the earth! Plant loving kindness in field and hamlet and town! Work together! Know the good clean laughter of brothers! Let kinship rule between neighbor and neighbor, between farm and farm, between country and city! Draw out your soul to the hungry! Get homes for the homeless! Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream!

F. D. WENTZEL<sup>6</sup>

#### HANDS OF YOUNG CHURCHMEN BUILDING WORLD BROTHERHOOD

(For setting, a picture not only of Durer's "Praying Hands" but of hands at work—photographs or sketches—might be used. Follow the meditation with a question, "What of our hands?" and a moment for silent thinking of what further we can do . . . must do . . . and with God's help, will do, to spread brotherly ways around us.)

Hands are building world brotherhood. What kind of hands?

The hands of a woman who wrote her news commentator asking him to call them Japanese, not "Japs."

The hands of a dime-store clerk in a northern town who stepped in and waited on two Negroes the other clerks had ignored.

The hands of thirty-six conscientious objectors who did hard labor on a six months' starvation diet in preparation for helping in the rehabilitation of Europe's starved peoples.

The hands of a tireless labor leader, giving her very life that Oriental, Negro, and Mexican workers should have working conditions equal to those of so-called "whites."

The hands of youth work-campers in a slum area building a cooperative cannery.

The hands of people like ourselves who refuse to let custom or prejudice warp our living . . . who speak and act and give the work of our hands to the building of world brotherhood in our day.<sup>7</sup>

#### MISSIONS TODAY

By a mission-field we used to mean an

<sup>6</sup>From *Song of the Earth*, pp. 101, 103, 107. The Christian Education Press, 1946. Used by permission.

<sup>7</sup>Written by a group of young people.



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• **WHAT HAPPENED TO JO JO**—Jo Jo, a high school teen-ager, thought it was "romantic" to help the people in her town's slum area, until a ruffian threw a rock which hit her on the head. Then Jo Jo and her young people's group were forced to examine their true motives for Christian service. \*"Recommended for motivating to constructive action."

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area of land; now we mean an area of life. There is no better definition of a modern mission-field than that given by a layman from Toronto . . . : "A mission-field is any area of life in which Jesus Christ is unknown."

The chief characteristic of missions used to be expansion; now it is penetration. The world word "go" still remains—not only "go out" to all the world, but "go in" to all of life. We used to speak of "neglected continents"; now we find that these continents are vast neglected areas of individual, social, national, and international life. We used to speak of "unoccupied fields"; now we find them in human hearts everywhere. We used to speak of "unfinished tasks"; now we find them next door. We used to speak of the "non-Christian world"; now we find that America is part of it. We used to speak of "giving the gospel to the whole world"; now we speak of applying the gospel to the whole of life.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. The Church for You Doth Wait.

Rise up, O youth of God!  
The church for you doth wait—  
Her strength unequal to her task,  
Rise up and make her great!<sup>9</sup>

YOU.

YOU, at this moment, have the honor to belong to a generation whose lips are touched by fire . . . The human race now passes through one of its great crises. New ideas, new issues—a new call for men to carry on work of righteousness, of charity, of courage, of patience, and of loyalty. . .

When you are old . . . however, and memory brings back this moment to your minds, let it be able to say to you: That was a great moment. It was the beginning of a new era . . . This world in its crisis called for volunteers, for men of faith in life, of patience in service, of charity, and of insight. I responded to the call however I could . . . I studied, I loved, I labored, unsparringly and hopefully, to be worthy of my generation.<sup>10</sup>

#### BUT WHAT DIFFERENCE CAN ONE PERSON MAKE?

Suppose I did set out to put Christ above all? Suppose I did take seriously my responsibility as a young churchman today. What good could one do?

—eleven disciples turned the world upside down.

—one was a missionary to the Gentiles (what if he hadn't gone?)

—two German students started a foreign missionary enterprise.

—an English cobbler and a Cambridge don awoke the church of England. . . . The story could go on and on . . .

It doesn't take much of a man, but it takes all there is of him.

God plus one is a majority.

AND YET—

My Father's world—and yet  
For me he leaves stirring mighty tasks;  
And bids me share with him  
In building love and truth and joy  
To make his dream come true.

My father's world—and yet  
On me waits part of all the beauty, love,  
And tenderness the world  
Might use in building other powers

<sup>8</sup>Casselman, A. V.: *Into All the World*. The Christian Education Press. Used by permission.

<sup>9</sup>Adapted from stanza of hymn by William P. Merrill. Permission requested of author.

<sup>10</sup>Josiah Royce.

<sup>11</sup>Author and source unknown.

To make his dream come true.<sup>11</sup>

LET ME BE CAPTURED BY A CAUSE  
Lord God, I confess unto thee my grievous sins of self-absorption.

Forgive me my wanderings of mind and will in the narrow confines of one small self.

Pull me out of this small world by capturing me in some cause.

Grant me a purpose for which to live, a purpose that in some way is measured by thy will.

Through my cause lay thou the destinies and hopes of other men heavily upon my heart.

Let my cause cost me something. Grant me, too, the joy of loving it with all my mind and heart and life.

Sanctify me through the perils of my cause. Hallow me in its heroisms. Stiffen me in its stern decisions. Baptize me in the necessities it imposes upon me. So, let me achieve in it joy and power.

In the name of One who said of his cause: "And how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Amen.

P. R. HAYWARD<sup>12</sup>

#### ONE POINTS THE WAY

He forces no man, each must choose his way,  
And as he chooses so the end will be;  
One went in front to point the Perfect Way,  
Who follows fears not where the end will be.

JOHN OXENHAM<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>From *Young People's Prayers*, p. 42. Association Press, 1945. Used by permission of publisher and author.

#### Further Aids

*Calls to reverence and worship:*

In God's house we are met. May our togetherness welcome his Presence in our midst. May our hearts be open, to give room for thoughts He may send.

In his holy temple of our lives, the God of creation comes. May we prepare him room, that there may come Joy to the world!

Quietly now we wait and worship . . .  
May we be ready, our God, Thy will to see; and seeing, to follow.

He has the whole world in his hand . . .  
He has us, here in this worshipping fellowship, in his hand. His love surrounds us, His strength upholds us. May we lift hearts and voices in praise.

Some hymns through which we may thank God for the church, or pray for his guidance on the church and on us as young churchmen: "Jesus, with thy church abide" (sing first three lines strongly, let echo-choir sing the last line of each stanza); stanza, "I love thy church, O God," in hymn, "I love thy kingdom, Lord;" stanza, "For thy church that evermore lifeth holy hands above," in hymn, "For the beauty of the earth;" "Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide;" "Christian, rise and act thy creed;" "I bind my heart this tide;" "Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a my heart;" "Forth in thy name, O Lord, we go;" "Christ of the upward way;" "The voice of God is calling."

<sup>13</sup>From *Gentlemen, the King! The Pilgrim Press*, 1928. Used by permission.



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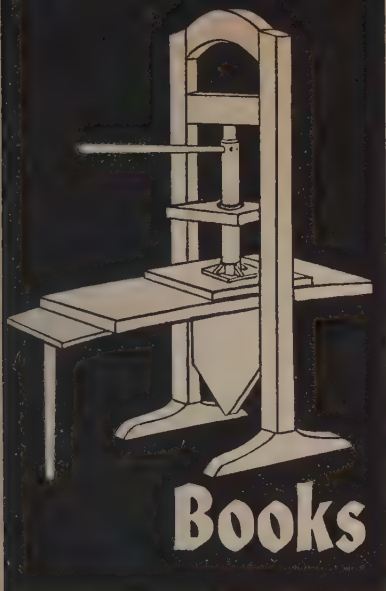
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## off the Press

### On Call for Youth

By Rudolph Wittenberg. New York, Association Press, 1955. 241 p. \$3.50.

Here is a book whose sub-title should be written larger: "How to Understand and Help Young People." In the introduction, this title is narrowed to mean the more or less normal youth of today. Rudolph Wittenberg has well described the "many faces" of youth. Parents, youth workers, ministers through this book will be enabled to recognize need when it is there and to avoid structuring when it is unnecessary. The case illustrations are clear and simple, not clinical. The most important chapter to this reviewer was Ten, "No Is Not a Dirty Word."

The language is easy to read; there is no attempt to overwhelm with jargon or lose us in intricate syntax. The type is large and the summary at the end of each chapter "In Brief" is well worthwhile. The only caveat this reviewer could have is that the italicized "instructions" or admonitions may be picked up by a too hasty reader and so this most empathetic book on understanding could be unfortunately converted into a rule book for youth counselors. This is a *must* for those beginning work with youth and the thinking of all who are interested in the "teen-ager" will be clarified.

C. UMHAU WOLF

### It's Time You Knew

By Gladys Denny Shultz. Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Co., 1955. 221 p. \$2.95.

The writer is already known by many readers as the author of *Letters to Jane* which is an outstanding guide to the upper-teens. Now this understanding mother answers important questions about sex for younger teen-age girls. She indicates that she feels girls have a right to know what is happening to them and why. Her presentation is frank and natural. She takes away much of the mystery which may cause girls concern and even lead them to do things which are harmful to themselves. The book is a help also for the parent or leader who is afraid or unable to answer sincere questions which girls ask.

Mrs. Shultz writes in a way to let girls know she has confidence in their good judgment when they have the facts. She has given an excellent guide for adolescence girls and for their mothers and leaders to use with them.

IMO RUYLE FOSTER

### How to Plan Informal Worship

By Winnifred Wygal. New York, Association Press, 1955. 64 p. \$1.00.

A person experienced in planning and leading worship in adult and youth groups shares some of her insights and observations in a practical book for men, women and young people. Even those inexperienced in leading worship services will discover resources and suggestions to help them lead informal worship periods in which members of the group will find themselves in God's presence.

Worship is important in the life of every Christian. Miss Wygal shows how this important worship can have spontaneity, creativity and informality without giving up order, beauty, meaning and dignity. Some worship materials are included in the book, also lists of other books, hymns, audio-visual materials and poems as resources.

While the book gives practical steps for the experienced or inexperienced leader it also gives inspiration for the leader who seeks to grow in his own religious life.

IMO RUYLE FOSTER

### Evangelism in the Sunday Church School

By Kenneth L. Cober. Philadelphia, The Judson Press, 1955. 93 p. \$0.50.

This booklet was written to undergird the Year of Baptist Achievement program of the American Baptist Convention. It is also to serve as a textbook and reader's guide for the first series course of the Standard Leadership Curriculum, "Evangelism in the Sunday Church School."

This guide, however, can be of value to pastors, teachers and parents of every denomination. It offers stimulating guidance for reaching persons and for building them into the life of the church. Practical ways also are revealed to show how the

church school, the greatest evangelistic agency of the church, can be made more effective in reaching and cultivating others for commitment.

PAUL L. STURGES

### Religions of America

By Leo Rosten. New York 20, Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1955. 281 p. Paper \$1.00. Clothbound \$3.50.

This book is full of interesting and factual information about religion and the churches. Very little of it is new material; most has been taken from other publications. But the fact that it is here put together in one volume will make it a very convenient source book of religious information.

The major section of the book—a series of articles on religious beliefs of major U.S. religious bodies—is a reprinting (with some expansion) of the series of articles on major religious groups printed in 1952 by *Look* magazine. Each article is written in a direct question-answer style; authors are officials or respected members of their particular religious groups.

Part Two of the book contains a great variety of facts and figures on church membership, the clergy, religious education, and other aspects of religion. Many of the statistics are reprinted from the *Yearbook of American Churches*; a comparison chart on what Catholics, Jews, and Protestants believe is reprinted from the *International Journal*; other data are taken from official Catholic and Jewish sources and from the results of various public opinion polls.

In using the statistics, it is important to note the date on which a poll or survey was made. For example, it is disappointing to find that the comparison of theological beliefs of ministers and theological students is based on a study made in 1929 by George Herbert Betts. One would wish for more recent data than that!

HELEN F. SPAULDING

### The Bent World

By J. V. Lahgmead Casserley. New York, Oxford University Press, 1955. 286 p. \$4.00.

In this brilliant analysis of East-West tensions in the light of the Christian faith, Dr. Casserley concentrates his attention on some "vitally relevant matters" which he has found lacking in other books on the subject. I commend the result highly. Parts of it are written on a popular level, as the jacket blurb advertises, but much of it is at a level far above the "popular" and, certainly, some of his conclusions will be startling to a "popular" thinking mind.

Besides correcting many false impressions as to Marxism, dialectical materialism, and communism as expressed in Leninism-Stalinism—and he does this very well—he shows how the West, in its obsession with "technics" and economic activity is ill prepared to combat communism except as its democracy is rooted in absolutes, "in a more deeply rooted insight into the ultimate value of human existence, a conviction that man is made in the last resort for God, and an appre-



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hension of the way in which fallen man inevitably tends to destroy himself if there is committed into his hands too much power over either himself or his neighbor."

The West is an integral part of a "bent" world—bent in the wrong direction, but there is hope in that "we still possess and cherish in the heart of the Western tradition our Christianity, the magic mirror in which we can see ourselves as we really are (italics mine). But how easy it has become to look into the glass, and then go out into our world of obsessive technical interests and accomplishments and straightway forget what the glass has revealed."

Dr. Casserley tells us plainly what the mirror of Christianity reveals about our Western democracy and he asserts that "in its idolatry of technics, in its toughness of mind, in its strange doctrine of justification not by super-natural faith but by humanistic dreams, it resembles communism too closely to argue against it cogently."

PAUL G. MACY

**Common Sense and World Affairs**

By Dorothy Fosdick. New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1955. 207 p. \$3.50.

In the foreword to her recent book dealing with the political life of the United States and the world Miss Fosdick has definitely earned the right to use the title it bears: *Common Sense and World Affairs*. It indeed is an appeal to the best that is connoted by the term "common sense." "I believe," she says, "the American people have resources of good sense which can now stand this country in excellent stead, if we will only make the most of them."

The book is a calm and thoughtfully wrought assessment of the international scene and the stake each of us has in it. It is the conviction of the author that a satisfactory foreign policy for our nation is dependent on the right attitudes of the people, the common people, who traditionally are guided by that virtue, common sense.

Acknowledgment of a sponsorship of the Rockefeller Foundation and the School of International Affairs, Columbia University, is made in the foreword. This gives the reader assurance of the dependableness of the research and the quality of the writing. Long continued interest in the political affairs of the world and first-hand contact with them in varied capacities has given the author a rich store of information from which to work. Power to analyse situations and the ability to express succinctly her ideas have enabled Miss Fosdick to produce a book that should have a wide reading.

The epigrammatic titles of the twelve provocative chapters aptly set forth the views developed in the study. This first and last ones serve as good examples: "To know when to be scared is the beginning of wisdom," and "To do the good that is straight under the nose is vigilance." The "you-can-do-it" suggestions in the last chapter should give appeal to the book for those who want to know what an individual can do to influence the world situation.

OTIS G. CARNES

**The Biology of the Spirit**

By Edmund W. Sinnott. New York, the Viking Press, 1955. 180 p. \$3.50.

**Christian Faith Today**

By Stephen Neill. London, Pelican Books, 1955. 272 p. 65 cents.

**Successful Living**

By Eustace Chesser. London, Penguin Handbooks. 167 p. 50 cents.

Upon first glance, these three volumes would appear to have little in common. The first is an American product, while the other two are British "soft-shelled" or paper-bound imports. Dean Sinnott of the Graduate School of Yale University is an eminent biologist. Bishop Neill is an Anglican ecclesiastic. Dr. Chesser is a medical practitioner and psychiatrist. A library would probably classify the first volume as "science," the second as "theology," and the third as "psychology."

And yet there is a common thread running through these three books. One might call it the quest for the meaning of life. Although the search is conducted along three different roads, the ultimate end which the authors are seeking is the same: What is life all about and how do I fit into it?

Dean Sinnott begins his search by going back to simple protoplasm. All life, both that of plants and animals, is characterized by goal-seeking. In trees, in micro-organisms, in sponges, in molds, in higher mammals the story is the same. "If normal development is blocked or interrupted, the organism, particularly in early stages and in lower types, shows a strong tendency to restore lost parts and regulate its growth processes so that it can still reach its goal." In every realm of nature, Dean Sinnott finds purpose. To account for this purpose, he can only find one explanation—God. Destroy the concept of God, and biology becomes meaningless.

Bishop Neill starts with the present confusion of modern man. In too many instances, he insists, the Christian Church is not helping the contemporary human being out of his muddled mental state. What he needs is a clear-cut explanation of the Gospel which is related to the world in which he lives and the problems which he faces every day. "There are those who, having sincerely accepted the Gospel as a way of life, and having committed themselves to follow and to serve Jesus Christ, find that they can make no further progress, unless the intellectual content of what they have been led to accept is worked out in a more or less systematic way; unless the different parts of the faith are seen in some relationship to one another as parts of an at least in some measure intelligible whole." To this task the bishop sets himself. He comes out at the same point as Dean Sinnott does—to God as the Organizing Principle of all life and the Goal of all life.

Dr. Chesser's starting point is introspection. He begins by asking three questions: Who are you? What are you? Where are you? His aim is "first to define or isolate those principles which seem to work through all existence, and secondly to examine how, applied to our small daily and personal life, they can bring us into more harmonious living." Although not as



outspokenly theistic as the dean and the bishop, the psychiatrist warns us that "our spiritual life is a very real part of our three-fold existence, not to be developed at the expense of body and mind, but to be harmoniously blended with our life on those two other planes."

THOMAS FRANKLYN HUDSON

## Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis

By William Graham Cole. New York, Oxford University Press, 1955. 232 p. \$4.00.

This is an excellent summary of the attitudes and interpretations of sex in Christian history. This book has been needed so that both Christians and psychoanalysts could see more clearly. The discussion of the biblical concepts is superb. God is to be thanked for the clear recognition of our Hellenistic heresies. (p. 194). Many pastors who read books like this, but avoid Bible study and theology, will be well rewarded. Pages 4-10 are a fine reorientation in the biblical conceptual world, and the last chapter seeks from theology to inform our opinion of sexuality.

There are small parts in the history section that we could question, but the overall study is accurate and fair. It is unfortunate that even his short personal synthesis is frustrated by the problem of "nature's primary aim in sex." Could it be that no aim is *primary* but several are complementary? This reviewer is also not so ready to dispose of attitudinal education as vain. (p.317)

This is the kind of book that will help pastors understand themselves, their parishioners and the doctors better. There is no need to have Fulton Sheen's antagonism toward psychiatry. Yet, there is need to keep ourselves theologically oriented in these days of *help-yourself* books and sermons.

There is much to be done before there is a proper synthesis for Christians. Psychiatry still has many problems to settle. One minor flaw in the book probably stems from the collegiate atmosphere in which Mr. Cole works. His sense of humor is at times sophomoric and the fine scholarship is momentarily lost, e.g. "all Gaul" (137), "Cook's Tour" (143), etc.

No one will make a mistake in reading and rereading this volume as he seeks to reconstruct his own interpretation of sex.

C. UMHAU WOLF

## Danish Rebel

By Johannes Knudsen. Philadelphia, Muhlenberg Press, 1955. 239 p. \$3.50.

No one can overestimate the importance and impact of N. F. S. Grundtvig on Danish theology, literature, and education. Born in 1783, he lived in the period following the Napoleonic wars while his mind and spirit stretched ahead to meet the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

One of the most enigmatic of men, he has been condemned as a heretic yet acclaimed as a prophet. Theologian, historian, philosopher, and hymn writer, Grundtvig was all these, but his greatest achievement was the development of the remarkable system of education known as

the Danish Folk School. His influence has permeated into nearly every phase of Danish culture, and to understand Denmark it is necessary to have a knowledge of this man who shaped the theology and thinking of that country. In *Danish Rebel*, Grundtvig's personality emerges with force and clarity.

Author Johannes Knudsen, now guest professor at the Chicago Lutheran Seminary in Maywood, Illinois, is a former president of Grand View College and dean of Grand View Seminary, both in Des Moines, Iowa; before that, he served pastorates in Minnesota and Connecticut.

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Educated in both the United States and Denmark, Dr. Knudsen is eminently qualified to write this definitive biography of Grundtvig.

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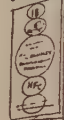
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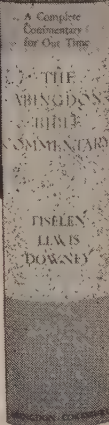
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# When Children Pray

(Continued from Page 14)

The junior has a vibrant vitality and love of action. The leader's carefully-laid worship plans may come tumbling down in a heap because Alex releases a smuggled-in grasshopper at the crucial moment. She must be ready to enter into the experience, instantly bringing herself to where they are, then patiently leading them in a constructive direction. After the grasshopper is caught and put into a jar she asks or tells why it can jump so far. A list of insects which have the capacity to perform unusual feats is made on the blackboard. The leader suggests one of the capable readers find Proverbs 30:24-28 and read it to the group. Then the group joins in a song of praise to the Creator. A spontaneous litany may be created, based on the list of remarkable insects, and with a responsive line of thanks for God's wisdom and creative genius. So the juniors have had a real prayer experience, not the one the leader had planned but possibly a more meaningful one.

This does not mean that she need not carefully plan. It indicates the need for careful planning; we need to create an atmosphere and induce a mood of worship in which God's presence is real; we need a variety of approaches and an element of surprise which holds interest. Pupil participation in planning, arranging

flowers, reading scripture, and preparing the prayer makes the service of worship their own.

It is easy for juniors to fall into using pet phrases which soon lose meaning or to make prayer a time of passive quietness with the outward appearance of attention while minds go off exploring far-distant places.

During the junior years commitment can have an increasing place in worship and prayer. Life's directions are beginning to take shape. But decisions do not come easily and the junior needs ample opportunity for frank discussion of religious and other questions with parents and leaders with whom he feels comfortable in conversation and who do not try to force their own ideas upon him. He must arrive at his commitments under his own power.

Life is big and adventurous and only if Christianity is opening to him in its majesty, its beauty, its vitality will it continue to have a place in his inner life.

## Resources for Parents and Teachers

- And When You Pray*, Grace McGavran  
*When Children Ask*, Marguerite Bro  
*Our Little Child Faces Life*, Mary C. Odell  
*Our Little Child Grows Toward God*, Mary C. Odell  
*Guideposts to Creative Family Worship*, Edward W. and Anna L. Gebhardt  
*Opening the Door to God, Sweet*  
*Helping Your Child to Pray* (pamphlet)  
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*Our Children and God*, Mrs. Clarence H. Hamilton



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## What's Happening

### Annual Meeting of Division in Cincinnati, February, 10-17

CHICAGO, Ill.—Plans are being completed for the annual meeting of the Division of Christian Education, National Council of Churches. This will be held in Cincinnati, Ohio, February 10-17. The meetings involve various official and consultative groups related to the three commissions of the Division: General Christian Education, Missionary Education and Higher Education. The schedule of events is as follows:

Feb. 10, 11, Age-group Program Committees.

Feb. 11, 12, Functional Program Committees.

Feb. 10-13, Committees and Departments of the Commission on Christian Higher Education.

Feb. 13, Executive Committee, Joint Department of Family Life.

Feb. 13, 14, Commission on General Christian Education.

Feb. 14-16, Associated Sections: Administration and Leadership; Adult Work; Children's Work; City and State Executives; Editors; Lay; Missionary Education; Pastors; Professors' and Research; Week-day; Youth.

Feb. 17, Executive Board, Division of Christian Education.

The associated sections are, in general, composed of persons with professional responsibilities in the area named, though qualifications vary from section to section. The Pastors' and Lay sections are open to persons with a concern for religious education but without denominational or council staff positions. The Directors' Section is made up of local church directors of religious education. It has grown so much in size in recent years that it now holds its meeting in advance of the other sections, for one day only. This permits members to attend the meetings of other sections.

There are several events in which all sections participate. On February 14 there

will be a Visual Education Fellowship Dinner at 5:30, followed by a public mass meeting at 7:45. On the 15th there will be a Division Fellowship Luncheon. On the evening of the 15th most of the sections will have dinners of their own in the churches of Cincinnati. The closing joint session will be on Thursday evening at 7:30.

The theme of the annual meeting, "Reach—Teach—Win," will be explored not only in section programs but in these joint sessions.

The meetings will be held in a group of hotels in downtown Cincinnati, with the Hotel Sheraton-Gibson as headquarters. Usually about 1,300 to 1,500 persons attend.

Staff members of the Commission on General Christian Education serve as advisors to the sections. Inquiries may be addressed to the name of the Section, National Council of Churches, 79 E. Adams St., Chicago 3, Illinois.

### NBC Religious Programs

NEW YORK, N.Y. — The National Broadcasting Company began offering on Christmas Day a new series of religious drama, telecast over their network. This series is entitled "His Way, His Word." On Christmas Day "No Room at the Inn" was given and on January 29 "The Prodigal Son" is scheduled. Later programs are: "Where Your Treasure Is," on Sunday, February 26 at 2:30 E.S.T., and "The Fruitless Fig Tree" on Sunday, March 25, at 2:30, E.S.T.

### Religious Radio-Television Workshops Continue

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For information about these workshops, see the January issue of the *International Journal*, page 39, or write to Charles H. Schmitz, National Council of Churches, 220 Fifth Ave., New York 1, N.Y.

### Briefs

**RICHMOND, Va.** — Several staff changes in the Division of Religious Education, Presbyterian Church in the U.S., have been announced:

**REV. DAVID B. WALTHALL**, Director of Leadership Education, has become Regional Director of the Synod of Georgia and is serving part-time as guest professor of Christian Education at Columbia Seminary, Decatur, Georgia.

The Departments of Church School Administration and Leadership have been combined. The **REV. MORRIS WARREN** is the director of the department.

**DR. JOHN L. FAIRLY** expects to resign as Secretary of the Division at the end of 1956, at which time **REV. WILLIAM P. ANDERSON, JR.**, will take this position. Mr. Anderson, now director of the Department of Adult and Family Education, will become Associate Director of the Division on July 1.

**NEW YORK, N.Y.**—The **REV. STANLEY I. STUBER** has resigned as general secretary and director of the Japan International Christian University Foundation. On February 1 he is to become the general secretary of the Council of Churches of Greater Kansas City.

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.**—Abingdon Press announces that, upon recommendation of the six judges, the Abingdon Award will not be given this year. The judges agreed that none of the manuscripts submitted was so outstanding as to merit the award

of \$7,500 given every two or three years for a book manuscript which "will accomplish the greatest good for the Christian faith and Christian living among all people." The size of the next award will be increased to \$12,500 and will probably be offered in 1957 or 1958.

**CHICAGO, Ill.** — **MRS. CHARLES W. GILKEY**, a former president of the National Y.W.C.A. and representative of the Y.W.C.A. to the Assembly of the Division of Christian Education, National Council of Churches, died on November 11, 1955 at the age of sixty-six. She was the wife of Dr. Charles W. Gilkey, dean emeritus of Rockefeller Memorial Chapel of the University of Chicago.

**NEW YORK, N.Y.**—**DR. FRANK WILSON PRICE** has been appointed to direct the joint foreign missionary research programs of the National Council of Churches and Union Theological Seminary. On February 1 he will become Director of the Missionary Research Library at Union, and secretary of the research committee of the Division of Foreign Missions, National Council of Churches. Dr. Price was a missionary in China for 27 years. He served as moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S. during the 1953-54 biennium.

### Looking for an Opening?

There are openings for secretaries and clerical workers in the Chicago and New York offices of the National Council of Churches, for persons of little or much experience. These offer reasonably good salaries and opportunity to play a part in a significant movement. For information, write Miss Helen Kindt, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N.Y.

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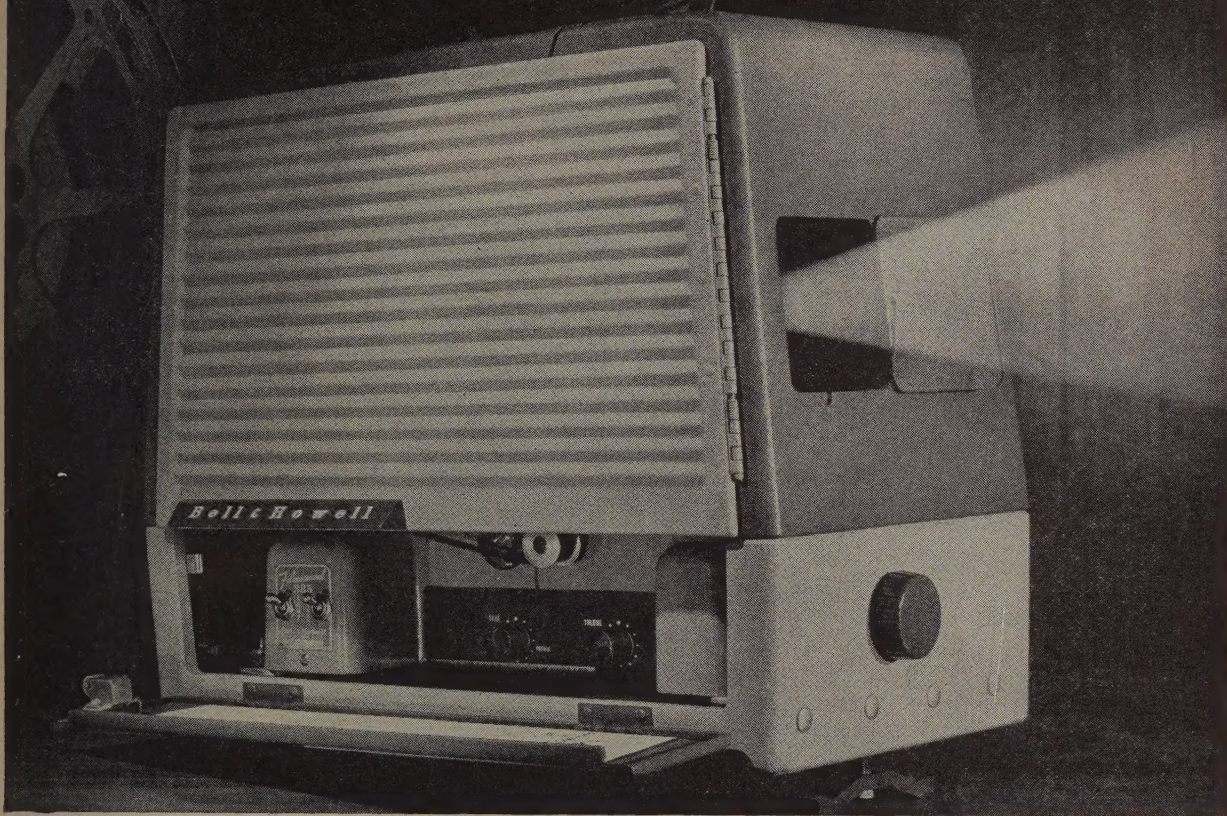
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"One of the primary purposes of audio-visuals is to provide an aid to worship."

# The Use of A-Vs in Worship

THE GREAT EXPERIENCE for the Christian is drawing close to God. Worship might be defined as an avenue leading toward an intimate and progressive relationship with God. One lane in this avenue is meditation or contemplation, and audio-visuals are often naturals for guiding such meditation.

To come into God's presence a Christian must focus his attention on the attributes of God or of Jesus the Son, or on great Christian ideas. Audio-visuals command attention. If the right ones are used they will move the viewer, inspire him, touch his emotions. Because of the great need for worship in the Christian experience, one of the primary purposes of audio-visuals is to provide an aid to this important experience.

Reverence is the spirit of worship, but many worship services fall short in this respect. The spirit of reverence is particularly difficult to maintain when using projected materials, which require careful coordination. If the method is at all distracting, it should not be used. The following points will help in avoiding distractions:

Have equipment all set up and ready to go before the stated meeting time. Projection from a balcony is far less distracting than from the middle aisle. Place the projector on a sturdy table. Install the projection screen at the proper location. Place the speaker near the screen and in an unobtrusive spot. Focus the picture on the screen, always being sure the film is advanced to the first picture. Check the volume. Check all equipment to be sure it is in working order.

Follow the script closely to avoid losing the place. Have the projector on before cutting the house lights; after projection be sure the house lights are on before the projector light is shut off. An added note of reverence is possible by fading out a picture by slowly moving your hand in front of the lens.

The following list of titles, though by no means inclusive, may be of help in selecting materials as aids to worship. (S, slides; SFS, slide-filmstrip; R, record; F, motion picture film)

S—The Old Testament and the Fine Arts (Cynthia Pearl Maus)

S—Christ and the Fine Arts (Cynthia Pearl Maus)

S—Life of Christ (Elsie Anna Wood)

S—Life of Christ (Jacques Barosin) (Also available in filmstrip and motion picture)

SFS—Each with His Own Brush (also available in slides)

R—So Will We Sing (3-12" records) (Broadcasting and Film Commission)

F—Angel in Ebony (Produced by Taylor University)

F—Souls in Conflict (Produced by the Billy Graham Organization)

F—Modern inspirational films (Family Films, Broadcasting and Film Commission, and others)

F—Bible films, such as those from Cathedral and Family Films.

For private worship, listen to the radio program—"Thy Kingdom Come"—(NBC—6:30-7:00 p.m., EST, Saturdays)

Worship audio-visuals are not, for the most part, built to your specific order. They must be planned, developed, and organized to impart the spirit or message in leading persons to God. An audio-visual is only an aid and, therefore, usually only a part of the service of worship. Used with scripture, readings from other literature, prayer, music, and comments it can help lead the audience into a spirit of worship.

Audio-visuals may not be built to order, but they must be custom built; that is, "customer" built. When using them you must build them into the desired worship experience. If the material you need is not available\* you can develop your own slide set and script! Put music on tape to accompany it. Plan your own worship services using equipment on hand. Try illustrating a litany, a poem, a passage of scripture, the Lord's Prayer, or some other literature. The text will live anew and foster real worship.

For further reading on the subject of audio-visuals in worship, read chapter four "Seeing and Worshipping," in *Visual Aids in the Church* by William L. Rogers and Paul H. Vieth.

\*Check the *Audio-Visual Resource Guide* for descriptions and sources of materials listed.

## New Release Evaluation

### "What Price Freedom"

44 minutes, motion picture in color or b & w. Produced by Paul F. Heard Productions and released through the Broadcasting & Film Commission, NCC, 1955. Available from BFC, RFL, denom. publ. houses, and some other local rental libraries. Rental: \$15, color; \$10, b & w.

The story of an American's actual experiences in the divided German city of Berlin provides the film account of Christianity facing Communism in one locale of human unrest.

The American is a business man who, with a free winter afternoon on his hands, decides to take a leisurely stroll around the city. It becomes so leisurely, as a matter of fact, that he doesn't realize it when he walks into East Berlin. Once within this part of the city, however, he figures there will be little harm in continuing his walk.

A chance meeting with a young East German woman in a street market sets up a chain of circumstances that cause him inadvertently to follow her into a Communist-controlled factory workers' meeting wherein the woman refuses to vote on an issue because it is unchristian.

While the two talk over their common religious feelings in a coffee shop a few minutes after the meeting concludes, they are joined by the party commissar who has followed them both from the gathering-place. As he challenges them, he slowly comes to a standstill and, after admitting to them he "trusts their cross," proceeds to tell how he no longer believes in Communism but there is no retreat, no hope. Though the young woman accentuates the fact that with God there is always hope, the man abruptly leaves, advising the American to return to the western sector as soon as he can.

Together, the two walk to the dividing barrier and Larry asks Ilse to come with him. But she says she cannot for her place is with her people and they need Christian witness desperately in these revolutionary times. Thus, Larry returns to the American zone and his comfortable life but his Christian position will never be quite the same for he has seen a faith in action that challenges and stimulates his own to its very roots.

Filmed primarily on location and vividly capturing the impact of faithful Christian witness in Communistic areas, the film is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** for general audiences. It will be especially valuable in understanding and discussing the 1955-56 foreign missions theme of "Christianity in Modern Revolutionary Times."

Though the love-story angle is a bit slow-moving, the production builds consistently toward a highly challenging climax. Acting is excellent; the woman is adequately underplayed, the commissar is forcefully portrayed as the haunted, once-hopeful man he is. Some may question the relatively small amount of East German police work concentrated on the American's intrusion into their zone, but this does not appreciably weaken the film's potential effectiveness and utilization.

The Rev. Mr. Eller is Director of Audio-Visual Education, Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Illinois.



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